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**CONVERSATIONS ON CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOX
CHRISTIANITY**

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INTRODUCTION

Present book is the result of some 2 years of dialogue that I had starting with 2012 to the year 2014 with Jordan Zanetis who is a friend of mine and a graduate of the Holy Cross Hellenic School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts. As many young persons Jordan is a man in search for God in our times as we know very much under pressure and lots of restlessness. I came to meet with Jordan I think not by chance. Although Jordan is some 5 years younger than me, we had in the last 2 years some very good talks relating mostly to the Orthodox Church. I considered that these talks would be good to be known by some others who eventually many benefit from them. I came to meet with Jordan during his last year in Holy Cross Massachusetts. This school is familiar with me long time ago when as an adolescent I have applied to this school. This is some 17 years ago. It was Jordan Zanetis who has brought back in me my past interest. A school founded in 1937, I came to know again what takes place in there. To this I am grateful to my friend Jordan Zanetis who has brought to reconnect a tie long time ago broken.

These dialogues are not made up by me but are very much true and real. They are so to say centered very much on Orthodox Christianity. What it takes to be an orthodox Christian in the 21st century? Is there a difference being an Orthodox Christian? What it means to be an Orthodox Christian in North America and as well what it means to be an orthodox Christian in Europe? These are some things that this book is going to ask and answer. Although the method of dialog with Jordan was mostly on the internet and on facebook, I think that there would be people interested to see what we have say. What we want to say is that although some consider that is somehow inappropriate to be an orthodox Christian, in fact we should do our best to be orthodox Christians. This is a fact that we cannot deny. On historical grounds the Orthodox Church is very much the Church founded by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I have tried to give to these dialogues a positive aspect and a good reading. The method to solve most of our problems in our days is by dialogue and by conversation. To this end the reader would be able to see that I have not tried to convince my dialogue partner of my opinions. We live in a world that becomes day by day so to say made up by single talking: people like to be heard and not to hear the others. Those who are not aware of the full potential of the dialogue they will find a way to figure what this is about.

Orthodox Christianity is a faith grounded in tradition and in the past. Its roots go back to the time of the past of our Lord Jesus Christ into this world. For our days is it very much impossible to talk and to dialogue on our Lord Jesus Christ outside tradition and past. Orthodox Christianity is open to dialogue and this is the main motive I choose to write the present book. We try to bring to the simple believer a tool for his daily life. Jordan and I have tried to provide the reader with a tool for open minded men and women. Our book is a small invitation to the historical truth of the Orthodox faith. We need to be grounded in the historical truth of who was and who is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As orthodox Christians we are in search for the salvation of our souls. This salvation comes only from our Lord Jesus Christ. This book is a

book that is concerned with what we can say as what it means to be an Orthodox Christian in our contemporary days. It is actual? It is of significance? Does it make a difference so to say?

Our world is most of the times shallow and why not most of the times concerned with pragmatic things. Men want to know how make much money, what it takes to make their income grow as much as possible? Let us not forget that if we search for the Kingdom of Heaven, God will add the rest or what is missing to our lives. In reality very few of us we are searching for the kingdom of heaven. Why? Because most of us do not believe that such a thing exists. If the kingdom of heaven does not exist, then our Lord Jesus Christ who was dead and who rose from the dead has not existed. Jordan and I have tried to make the best and we hope that our talks are in a way useful to those who are interested. We do not want to encourage in this book the sectarian mindset that is setting apart what we call orthodox Christianity. We need to be as much as possible faithful to the tradition that we have received from the past from our holy fathers and from the rest of the ecumenical councils. We do not want to create fear and panic that there is no path to salvation for the contemporary times. What we need is to do our best in our attempts to reach salvation. Dialog and talking is always a way to reach salvation and to save our souls. There is not room for sectarian seduction inside Christianity. Those who create sects and are faithful to sectarian movement we can say they don't have much to do with the way of the traditional dialogue of the Orthodox Church.

THE BEGINNING

- Jordan it is very nice to meet with you.
- As well. The pleasure is mine.
- You think that being polite is an orthodox thing?
- What question is this?
- Many think that is not necessary to be polite and in the same time a religious man.
- What do you think?
- I think that being religious means to be polite or better to say does not exclude what it means to be polite.
- I have not thought much on this.
- Well, it is not a major issue but is good to have it in mind.
- Thank for bringing that up.
- No problem. So Jordan, what should we know on you?
- Not much.
- Why is that?
- I don't think I am a remarkable man.
- Hmm.....it is always good to be humble.
- I think I am not a humble man.
- There is always room to work on that.
- You think so?
- Yea. You know the origin of the word humble?
- Not exactly.
- It is actually a Latin word and it comes from humus.
- Latin is a language that is used much by the Catholics.
- That is somehow strange.

- You think so?
- Yes. Latin was a language of the law.
- Correct. Roman Empire was an empire of law.
- But to come back to the world humble, in Latin comes from humus which means earth.
- I do not see much connection.
- There is a dual connection. The first connection is that humble means to keep your self low or meaning that you should not boast much and the second meaning is that you should be with your "feet in the ground."
- What you mean by that?
- By that I mean that you should be realistic.
- You think I am not humble?
- My question was not if you are humble or not. My question was on what can your say on you? The basics.
- Well I was born on October the 10th, 1983 in Hendersonville Tennessee.
- So you are a Tennessee man so to say.
- Yup. No doubt on that.
- And you have some Greek origins in your family?
- Yea. Most likely some of my ancestors came in America from Greece.
- What do you think on Greece?
- I have been there.
- And you like it?
- Yes. Is an orthodox country.
- Something that America is not.
- Right. This is not indifferent to me.
- I can understand that. America is still a Christian country.
- We have lots of lacking as far as faith is concerned in America.
- There is always room for improvement.
- What do you mean by that?
- It is better to see the full side of the glass and not the empty side of the glass.
- You mean I should be optimistic?
- Why not?
- America is mainly a protestant and neo-protestant country.
- Yea. But as I said it is still a Christian country.
- Enough on me. Tell me on you.
- What you want to know?
- As much as I can.
- I was born in 1978 in an ancient Romanian city of Cugir.
- Never heard of it.
- Well that is not my mistake I guess.
- Hahahahaahaha.
- Cugir goes back to the times of ancient history.
- Ancient history? Interesting.
- Yes you can google Cugir. It was the ancient city of Singidava during Dacian Kings.
- You are saying there were kings in your area?
- Yea. The Dacian sate was a monarchist one.
- I wonder what it is to be a king?

- There were no official kings in America. I can understand that.
- That is true. We had no kings here.
- We can say that there is a gap in American history.
- Why do you say that?
- Well you know the debate as to who discovered America.
- Who do you think that discovered America?
- I will have lots of problems if I say that.
- Why?
- As you know the historical truth is always mystified.
- Can you be specific?
- The popular story is that America was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492.
- And you don't think this is right.
- No, not at all.
- What makes you think that?
- Leif Eriksson.
- He was from Scandinavia.
- That is correct he reached North American shores in around 1002 or 1003.
- What part of Scandinavia do you think he was from?
- Most likely Norway.
- This is what I thought so.
- Well, these are issues that are not said much in the class room.
- This is so true. Our past is very much a fiction.
- There are few who know that Leif Erickson came for the first time in North America and not as most think Columbus.
- Radu I do not see where you are getting to?
- I am getting where we should.
- And where do you think we are getting unto?
- Well as I said many times people want to create a history that is convenient with their aims and passions.
- Can you be specific?
- Leif Erickson came from Scandinavia in America and how do you think he named America?
- I have no clue. This was not said to us in school.
- The first name of America was actually Vineland.
- Vineland?
- That is correct. In Scandinavian it means The land of Grapes.
- The land of Grapes. That is kind of funny.
- It is funny. Most likely Leif liked grapes.
- I like grapes as well.
- Few Americans would actually consider themselves as grape people.
- That is true but there are many Americans who like grapes.
- This is not about what Americans like today. We are talking here of something that took place in the year 1003, and 1003 is long time ago.
- It is hard to follow you.
- Well is not complicated I think.
- I think is very complicated. I was not told the truth.

- The truth is that Leif Erickson discovered America and not Columbus.
- I get what you are saying.
- Columbus came in America 400 years later.
- Then why is the big deal about Columbus?
- That deal is that he made the first ocean road into the new land of America.
- What do you mean? No one made a road by ocean in America?
- That is correct. Middle Age people were afraid to pass the Atlantic.
- Why?
- They thought the earth is just horizontal and not a round and they may fall.
- And that is why for 400 years they have not crossed the Atlantic?
- Most likely. People in middle ages are not the people we know today.
- So Radu, you are saying Columbus came in America 400 years after Leif Erickson?
- That is correct.
- Then how do you explain the Native Americans?
- Very simple. You see, Native Americans are not so to say Indians.
- But we call them Indians.
- That is incorrect. What we know from history is that after Leif reached America the Eskimos came in America.
- You are saying Native Americans came from Eskimos?
- That is right. They were the first settlers in the new land.
- How do you explain then the process of colonization that took place after this?
- This is another story.
- What other story?
- Well you see, after the Eskimos settled in America they became so to say tribal.
- Why is that?
- It was hard for them to adapt to the new land and they came from cold and ice space.
- You mean they were lazy?
- You can say that. Meanwhile in Europe took place the industrial revolution.
- What has to do with Eskimos?
- The Eskimos were so to say naturalist. They wanted a way of life as must simple and no complex attached to it.
- You are saying they disliked industry?
- Yes and they moved on with their tribe life that was usual at the North Pole.
- These are information that I did not know.
- There is always time to adjust.
- So you are saying that America has a 1000 years history?
- That is correct. Some want to make it short.
- On what do you base your opinion?
- There were some discoveries made around Labrador area in Canada that are some 1000 years old.
- You mean from the old Vineland?
- That is true.
- Vineland is the first name America had.
- This is so good to know I guess.
- I am glad we agree.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN NORTH AMERICA

- Radu I find your thoughts on America and its discovery so to say as much as interesting and intriguing.
- That is good I guess. Many take the past and the history without thinking much to it.
- You are saying that history is not like mathematics?
- That is correct. You need to apprehend so to say history and not just memorize some data.
- But how do you see faith in America?
- This is a good question. Starting with the 20th century America became so to say a land of pragmatism and materialism.
- Why do you think that is so?
- Well in the 20th century America identified itself very much what we know as capitalism.
- And that is not good?
- Capitalism without democracy is like a car without fuel.
- So you are saying that is not just enough for America to be a capitalist state?
- That is most certain. But to come back to the issue of faith.
- There are few orthodox Christians in North America.
- That is correct and we have to go back to the basics.
- What do you mean by basics?
- Religion means in Latin "connection".
- So in religion you are connected with God.
- That is the primordial truth of religion: it sets you in dialogue or relation with God.
- And how this applies to America?
- It applies to America that each sane American wants to be in relation or so to say "connected" to God in a way.
- But there is possibility not to have a connection with God?
- That is atheism, someone who denies or rejects God. This is why in the 20th century America was against Soviet Union. It was not much to do communist ideal which is very much communion from where the term comes. It was due to the fact that Soviets were against God and faith in God.
- I see where you are getting to, but you see there are some few orthodox in America maybe 7% or 8%.
- This takes us to the basic question: what is more important quality or quantity?
- What do you think?
- I think is more important quality
- Why?
- Well, let's take for example food. You like to eat just one good burger or 20 bad burgers?
- I see what you mean.
- America is so to say a country of freedom but religion is not conditioned by freedom. Each person wants to be in relation with God. This is a basic need such as the need to eat or the need to drink.
- Well I am 100% American I can say that many times people don't show that they need to relation with God.

- They don't show but within or inside each man longs for God. It is true that eventually there is a particular way of longing for God in America.
- Can you be more specific?
- Well, if you are going to study church history and mostly Orthodox Church History you are going to see that in the orthodox countries such as Greece, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania or Serbia each has its way of feeling or so to say of experiencing their relation with God.
- Ukraine, I like the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.
- Do you?
- Yes I do.
- Why?
- They have a piety that we don't have in America.
- That brings into topic the fact that Ukraine and Russia were one and the same country until Middle Ages.
- From where did you get that?
- Ukraine was a country that had long time ago boarders with the Mongolian state or what we know today as Mongolia.
- I was not aware of that Radu.
- The capital of old Ukraine was actually a city called Novgorod and that city was long time capital of what we know as Russia today.
- So Moscow is now the first and only capital of Russia?
- No, Novgorod was the fist capital.
- I am interested to know what is your view on religion in America?
- As I said religion is a need that each sane person has, but there are many peculiar ways to express it.
- Where you are getting to?
- Well, a professional actor from Hollywood has the need to be in relation with God but his way of experiencing and expressing it is not the same with what experiences a priest in a church.
- You are saying we should have a broader image or religion?
- Most certainly. Otherwise we would come so to say a Jihad movement.
- What is wrong with Jihad?
- What was wrong with Aquida?
- They destroyed the World Trade Center.
- You see, just mentioning that gives me the creeps.
- Why?
- The intensity of violence was too big for me at that time.
- But you managed to get over it.
- As you I have lived 9/11 and I don't want to remember the thing.
- Ok. I respect your wish. I am sorry for what has happened.
- Well you see, this is where people reach when they reject dialogue and conversation.
- Violence. You are saying violence is not compatible with religion?
- Exactly. Remember that when Saint Peter try to grab a sword to defeat our Lord Jesus Christ, He replied to Saint Peter that: "all those who rise the sword shall perish by the sword."
- That was 2000 years ago, you think it applies today?

- Yes it does and the Muslim community is the best example. They impose their beliefs with the price of death and violence.
- We had lots of problems with the Middle East.
- America is not the only country to face the Middle East. Iran was a real treat in the past.
- When in the past?
- Modern day Iran was also known in ancient times as Persia.
- That is news to me.
- You should not. Ancient Persia was very much a warrior land.
- You think we should learn from the past?
- I would not follow the example of Iran.
- Why? They are a treat to everybody.
- And America?
- I think that if a chance is given Iran and Middle East would subdue any time America.
- What makes you think so?
- This was the obvious message of 9/11: it is not you, it is us.
- I like they way you say it.
- I am as blunter as it can be.
- But I see very much the need to dialogue, the need for conversation.
- Is this not what we are doing right now?
- It does not make full sense to me.
- It should. If you could make a terrorist to dialogue or to converse eventually he would give up being a terrorist.
- This is a painful topic.
- There are many times of terrorist but the most dangerous are the religious motivated ones. They are fanatics so to say.
- What do you understand by a fanatic?
- A fanatic is someone who finally would kill those who oppose him.
- Killing is not good.
- All the times the fanatics find ways and means to support their deeds.
- Judas was in a way convinced that he does a good to Lord Jesus Christ by betraying Him.
- You are coming to the heart of the matter. Religious terrorists are the most perverted kind.
- Do you have some theologians that lived in America that you appreciate?
- In the 20th century America had an orthodox theologian that I priced: is father Alexander Schmemann.
- I think you mentioned that to me.
- Yes. Schmemann was from Estonia but schooled in France and that made him brilliant.
- Why?
- He had an oriental body with a occidental mind, the perfect combination.
- You seem to be familiar with Father Schmemann.
- I have read him extensively and those who are willing would have in his books a good gateway towards Christianity.
- Radu, I want to be honest with you.
- Go ahead.

- I feel the need to meet with some other cultures. I am stuck here in Holy Cross for my Master of Divinity.
- You told me you went to an Agricultural section in university.
- Yes. There I discovered I want to serve God.
- Better now than never.
- Yes I think so.
- Then you got your bachelor in Agriculture?
- Yes. I no longer feel the need to make agriculture.
- I can see that. I don't know much on American agriculture.
- It is expanding.
- That is good. You should not forget that in the past agriculture was done by slavery.
- You know well the American history?
- I have my good points.
- Slavery was a way to control the African American population.
- Yes. That takes us to times of Lincoln.
- You are familiar with that part of history?
- Yes. It is very contradictory for me.
- Why?
- A man frees the slaves and then he gets killed for it.
- It was long ago so you don't think we should come back to our topic on religion in America.
- It is in certain way as much as outdated to talk in America today on morals and virtues.
- I have no problem with that. Where there is no struggle, there is no virtue?
- Yes
- Virtue is a problematic word....in Latin means to be manly; INNER OR BETTER QUALITIES is better moral

in Greek it is arête αρετα.

- Yeah.
- I am glad the issue concerns you....virtues are important; like TEMPERANCE is a virtue few know this.
- Yeah.
- Orthodoxy is very much related to the notion of saints. Where there is orthodoxy there are saints.
- I have read the orthodox liturgy, is made by Saint John Chrysostom.
- Well....you like Saint John Chrysostom as I see. Very complex saint
- He had a difficult life.
- He died like a dog in exile
- Yes.
- An extreme ascetic
- He was not extreme at all....the Byzantine of his times were crazy men. They had the IMPERIAL CULT OF THE EMPEROR. THE EMPEROR was holy for them
- Oh I see.
- The emperor was above God...and here they were having issues with Saint John Chrysostom....as a consequence he was exiled and killed
- Ah so bad.

- The Byzantine made him walk like 3000 miles on feet without stop....by the end of the road poor man died. That is why we say he was a saint....he was innocent.

- I love too Saint John Chrysostom

- Yeah

- I am bothering you with my questions?

- I'm trying to write a sermon for Sunday on the other screen....

- OK then we will end....saint John Chrysostom is for sure in heaven....it was discovered to some monk in Constantinople.

- What was discovered?

- After this saint died...a monk who knew him very well asked God to reveal to him where is saint John in hell or in heaven....God gave him a discovery of heaven...he saw saints, angels and the saved ones....he did not see saint John....he asked in heaven where is saint John...it was told to him that he cannot see saint John because he is there where God is and no one can see where God is

- Wow!

- We end this topic....so that is how we know he is in heaven.

- Thanks for your insights.

- Well, what you have to know is that orthodoxy is in way a road or a path to balance.

- I heard that idea before.

- The truth is that most of the time we live in a world without balance or equilibrium.

- You think this is important.

- I think is important for America and mostly today to have a good notion of balance and equilibrium.

- Why you think so?

- Sin always starts with something extreme.

- You are referring to the seven capital sins?

- That as well. Gluttony is an extreme preoccupation with food, adultery is an extreme preoccupation with sex, anger is a extreme preoccupation with ones desires and appetites, pride is a preoccupation with the ego and the self and so on.

- And you are saying the solution is orthodoxy.

- Orthodoxy in the sense of equilibrium and of balance.

- It sounds like a phrase from the Star wars.

- Star wars has an original vision on few things like God as a force in the universe, and yes a balance in the world and why not in the universe.

- I do like Star wars.

- I was a kid when the movie came out. It made an impression I guess.

- Yes. Is now part of the American mind so to say.

- There are many things that should be a part of the American psyche so to say.

- Like what?

- An orthodox sense of matrimony.

- You mean orthodox weddings.

- Weddings are something that is lacking today a sense of the sacred.

- Can you be specific?

- Well you know that there are many types of wedding.

- European weddings are something that are very peculiar. An European wedding is today a fiasco if is not oriented today money and the party.

- You don't think a wedding should be a party?
- Well not only in Europe but as well in America most of the time weddings are made just for pleasure: food, dance, music, party.
- You are saying that a wedding should be a part of the search for the sacred?
- For a true orthodox Christian a wedding should be in a way what we can say a way to connect with God, something sacred.
- Many people fail to associate God with the sacred.
- The truth is that in our days most of the time God the Father is less and less associated with a paternal person. God is something that has to be exploited for pleasure.
- So you think that wedding in America need so to say improvement.
- America is becoming a country with a very high rate of divorce and this is mainly due to the fact that there is no notion of the sacred in the American wedding.
- Movies take a good part into this.
- Well yea, a movie wedding is a very much a party wedding. A wedding has to convey a sense of the sacred that is very there is a religious ceremony.
- Have you done many weddings?
- It happens I did. Few hundreds. All the time I have attempted to instill into the participants of the wedding a sense of the sacred, a sense of the presence of God, that wedding is not just a human institution but God has to assents with what humans do here on earth.
- That is something that is lacking in America. There are Las Vegas type weddings that are made in few minutes.
- It is no doubt that these weddings don't last.
- What do you think is the cause?
- I do not think you can ask God to help you and be next to you in a life time if while at the time of the wedding you allowed Him just few minutes.
- I see what you mean.
- In Greece for instance, wedding is made just in Church.
- Why?
- Greeks consider that the essence of the wedding is what takes place in the church.
- So you are against civic weddings?
- Not exactly, I am so to say against party weddings.
- Low class weddings care be a great source of writing....
- I attended few gypsy weddings.....is like unbelievable.
- Why?
- To this wedding the gypsy had a belly dancer with a snake in her hand. The dancer was walking in the room with the snake....people in the room were disappointed they were warning that are leaving so, the staff took her out from the wedding although she was the SURPRISE
- Wow
- What to you say to that? Going to a wedding with a snake?
- Probably not.
- Though in the South USA there are many churches that do snake handling also.
- This was a wedding I saw the thing with my own eyes.....
- When the snake was showing off 60% wanted to leave the room. The grooms were like frenzy...gypsy. I advice you to attend few gipsy weddings. Just to attend....not to participate
- Wow

- Yes.....gypsies are fun to analyze. They kill your mind and when it comes to weddings are the best.

- Funny.

- I will tell you one thing of a gypsy I know....this guy does not attend church. One day he came to the church I go too....He came with trigs foolish as I was I asked him why he came with trigs to church we usually go to church with shoes he said he saw in an Ikon Jesus wearing trigs....so that is why he comes to church wearing trigs. I was speechless.

- Radu let's turn back to Christianity in America.

- You are right I think we were going a bit far here.

- You think that orthodoxy is so to say attuned with scholarship?

- I do not think that you have to have a doctorate like in Oxford to be orthodox.

- You are familiar with Oxford?

- I knew few people related to this school.

- And what did you conclude?

- Starting with the 20th century there was an important movement in this school to turn back to roots, to come back to orthodoxy.

- Not familiar much with this.

- I will give you few books to see how things are in there.

- I heard that are very academic.

- The notion of academic is very much subject to interpretation.

- But you see conciliation between academy and orthodoxy?

- There were many academic saints: Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Symeon the New Theologian, to name just few.

- How can you reconcile secular knowledge with religious knowledge?

- It is very simple. In orthodoxy we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is not just our savior but He is the Logos or so to say the intellect of God or the mind of God.

- Then you are saying that science and knowledge comes from God?

- Most likely. God is all-knowing. All knowledge comes from Him and as well there is no knowledge outside Him.

- But there are many academic who say that secular knowledge and science does not relate to God.

- Is like saying that a child does not need a mother and a father to be born. That is a big lie. Secular knowledge in many ways can be a delusional knowledge.

- Why is that?

- Magic can mean knowledge to some but that is a perverted knowledge.

- So you are saying that Oxford is not against orthodoxy?

- Not at all.

- You can be a happy orthodox even in Oxford.

- I'm kind of busy at the moment. I have one more paper to write for finals week. Is good to have it.....

- I will give you some books from Oxford just to see what it is.

Meanwhile Christmas came in 2012.

- Merry Christmas!

- Merry Christmas Jordan.....

- What's going on?

- Not too much

- It is very early still

- I already made bacon, eggs, coffee, and prepared 2 carafes of egg nog.

- Hahaha....that sounds good....you don't mind company?

- Not at all

- I just came after CHRISTMAS LITURGY....a very private one.... SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH...is near me.

- Very nice

- Yea.....you are on vacation?

- Yes sir I am.

- Well enjoy the free time.... we are not robots to go on forever...

- Yes

- Anything else?

- Man I'm just waiting for everyone to wake up

- I had a great time in Tanzania.

- You should go there you'd have a blast!

- I am not quite a lover of Africa....here are lots of African Europeans here

- As there are African American

- I would rather visit China. I like the YING/YANG CHINESE PHILOSOPHY to a certain degree you are familiar with ying and yang?

- Yeah

- Where do you live again?

- See my profile.....Europe, Romania

- Right

There is some truth in YING AND YANG stuff....

- How is the economy there?

- Well we with the Greeks have set the foundations of modern economy as well mathematics. Mathematics appeared in our area. Economy is a Greek word....We are doing well...it could be better

- Ah

- Gypsies is a problem here...lots of gypsy

- Geez

- Where do they come from?

- India and Bangladesh.

- Do they have any culture or just poor?

- They are not poor...lazy....they don't work...just profit from everybody

- Ugh

- Ok

- I have to go

- Merry Christmas

- Merry Christmas Radu!

- Well let me know if my postings annoy you...usually if I find a good church song, I feel the need to share

- Its all good

- Then you are having a blessed Lenten time....

- How are you Radu?

- I hope I am going to make through lent...that is what I am doing....lent is not that easy for me.....is 50 days of fast

- Yeah, I know how you feel

- And how is you? You may not like it but I made you to hear Abba Money....that songs is very actual

it was written some 30 years ago.

- I'm ok

- Pray for me

- Struggling with finding a job after graduation to support my burgeoning relationship.

- Well, they don't want you for all to Holy Cross? Like they cannot give you as teaching job there?

- The Metropolises are very slow

- I never hear feedback

- Holy Cross played few tricks with me too in the '90's...that is why I don't like much that school

- Its not so much the school as it is the world

- Maybe if you ask the dean or the metropolitan [I think is Demetrius] they may give you a permanent teaching position...when I applied to Holy Cross was Archbishop Spiridon there

- Yeah, the school is broke - that's not happening anytime soon.

- Well the point is if you see your life teaching others? The point, I mean.

- True.

- What do you think?

- If she wanted to I would marry Kate and move to Africa to teach people who really want to be taught

- Something like that you can teach in Boston, why go to Africa? You don't think you can teach in Boston?

- Probably not lol

- Why would be that? I had a chance to talk with students from Boston area...they are quite smart

Boston University is pretty cool actually

- True

- I have to get ready for class

- Have a nice evening my friend

- All the best....there is something in Boston area for you too...

- It may take a while to know what my girlfriend is in Harrisburg, PA so I want to move there.

- OK bye

- Bye.

It came a period of no talks.

- Hello Jordan...then you love the UKRAINIAN CHURCH?

- I guess I do...

- THAT IS SUPRISING TO ME....not too many love Ukrainian things.....they are very PIOUS...I must say that

- Yeah

- Now you don't think I am violating your privacy...you mentioned to me that you are in a relation with a girl [female]....how is going on with that? Harrisburg or so?

Harrisburg.

- I don't ask the right questions?

- It is going well. Sorry, Radu, things are kind of busy today. I hope to marry her That is very good and I happy for you.....let me tell you something on weddings....I was invited once to a city mayor wedding...now this guy had a saxophone player.....I was seated next to the music band.....this saxophone player was sticking his sax into the microphone to make more sound....I left that wedding almost deaf....for the 3 days I was deaf....actually I wanted to go leave that wedding but the mayor was a good friend of mine so I had to stay.. It was a bad wedding.

- I would never do such a thing

- Well you won't but this guy did...it left me almost deaf. Is not a problem today, it was like 10 years ago. I still remember being like deaf. It is a custom today to have weddings with maximum music. Is actually foolish.

- Two traveling angels stopped to spend the night in the house of a wealthy family. The family was evil and refused to let them sleep in the guest room. They gave them a small room in the basement. While making their beds, the old angel saw a big hole in the wall and started to fix it right away. The young angel asked him:

- What are you doing?

- Things are not always what they seem to be, said the old angel. Next night the angels were sleeping in the house of a very poor man but very hospitable who lived with his wife. After the two shared their little food with them for dinner, the couple gave their own bed to sleep for the angels while they slept on the floor. The second day when the angels woke up they saw the two mourning. Their only source of income, a cow just died in that morning. The young angel was angry and asked the old angel:

-How can this happen? The first family that we went was rich and you did help them, while these two poor fellows gave to us all they had and you did nothing to help them.

- Things are not always what they seem, said the old angel.

- What do you mean by that?

- When we were in the basement I saw that in the wall there was hidden gold. Since the owner was greedy, and was incapable to share his wealth with others, I covered the wall so he would not be able to find his gold no longer only just by destroying his own house. Last night while sleeping the bed of the poor ones, the angel of death came to take the wife of the man. Now I asked God and he agreed that the life of the cow would be enough. So you see things are not what they seem.

- So Jordan, I will tell why "majestic" Radu Teodorescu is not executive director in Hollywood. 90% of movies would be comedy. Radu would fire all drama actors. Sorry I mean fired. Jordan...you are not obliged to be friends with me if you don't like.... Obliged

- No we need to take a break.

- Hi Jordan.....I am sorry for letting you outside my list of friends on facebook....you were very non/talkative in the last period of time....so I said I may let you free and without facebook ties...which as you can see they are very random sometimes....I hope you are not angry with this.....after you graduated, you became very silent....I asked you many questions....you did not respond so.....this is why I said I should not talk to you for a while.....

- It's okay.

- Good....well....you can say to me what is new with you? I know is not quite easy to get over Holy Cross.....now you have to reinvent yourself to a new life. You are not alone in the

situation. I had to reinvent myself too after graduating theology. Now that you are a theologian with a degree, I could suggest you to write something or a book on GOD THE FATHER. In orthodox theology we have few things written on this topic. A book with the title GOD THE FATHER IN THE 21ST CENTURY, would be of great interest. This is if your time allows you. We just say "Our father" in payers....but we actually write less on the topic. It would be interesting to study how we see God the father in the 21st century.

- Interesting

- Yea....I guess so....I wrote a book on God the Father [some 200 pages]....it was not one of my best books for me, but it was one of the most requested books I ever wrote [actually I wrote few books].....people want to know that God if our father for sure.....

- That's great

- Long time ago there was this saint who was very advanced in spiritual life. Now the evil one saw that and he did not like it. He came to the saint pretending to be a friend to tempt him. He said to the saint:

- I know that you are a saint. Tell me, how do you pray?

- Well I say to God Holy God.

The evil one said too Holy God.

- Then I say to God Holy mighty.

The evil one said Holy mighty.

- Then I say Holy immortal.

The evil one said Holy immortal.

- Then I say have mercy one us.

- What are you saying? Said the evil one.

- I am asking God to have mercy on us.

- You are asking God to have mercy on you? That I would never do. This is something I cannot at all.

Thus the evil one left the said defeated.

- Hi

- Hey....you are in South Canaan?

- Yes

- Good....very special land there

- Yup

- How comes you went to South Canaan? Is the place of my youth?

- I have friends here

- 9/11.....took place while I have been in South Canaan.....

- I have never been to the place since

- It is the same

- 9/11 the earth was shaking under my feel in South Canaan....is what I recall....I had a sense that the earth is not stable under my feet

- Wow...intense

- Well the thing took place.....and I hated everything about Pa and South Canaan

- Ah

- Now I am fine

- Good, I must go

- What band did you say you like?

- Depeche Mode.

- 2 or 3 songs from Depeche Mode are all right
- I love Depeche Mode
- How is life?
- Yea.....what I want to tell you is that if you are silent for long periods of time it can be interpreted that you are sad or things are wrong sad people are silent. Well why hide this from you?????....since the '90 the movies of Jodi Foster are very well known to me.....I don't know why I have to use a dictionary or two to get the action in her movies.....is like writing a doctorate in the academy.
- I will tell you when I get internet
Nothing to tell me.....I don't like actors....but I try to see the good in them
- Hi Radu!
- Hi.....you are coming in a tense moment.

- What's up?
- There is someone from the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC....next to Haito who want to talk to me
- Interesting
- I don't know what to do
- I have not been in the Dominican Republic.
- Hmm
- Is strange.....I have no ties there
- If they look for me they are in trouble....people look for me when they have trouble
- Why?
- Cuban Fidel Castro was not the best person on earth.
- Very true.
- I need to go to the grocery store
- Yes.....I was contemporary with Fidel Castro....I did not hate the man....but I did not love him either
he wanted REVOLUTION
- Yeah
- We will have revolution soon enough.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

- Radu I just want to tell you that in the last period of time I have developed a new kind of interest.
- What kind of interest I may ask?
- I am thinking of exploring some other parts of the world.
- That is good, but can you be a bit more specific?
- I am thinking to Africa.
- That is strange.
- Why?
- Who wants to visit Africa?
- They are people as well.
- Not all people are the same.
- I don't think I can follow you.
- Well you can be interested in Australia.

- Why?
- It is a very vast land.
- Have you been to Australia?
- No, but I had some friends there.
- I understand. My interest is not related to Australia.
- You like Africa?
- I am thinking to visit the Church there.
- Well there is a Mission project that includes Africa.
- What side of Africa?
- Tanzania and Kenya.
- That is far away.
- I know that. I just want your opinion.
- My opinion is negative.
- Why? I just want to help if I can.
- You don't seem to be concerned very much with the academic life.
- I will just go to Tanzania to visit the church.
- If that is what you really want.
- I want to do this for Christ and the church.
- I cannot object to that if that is what you want and feel you want to do.
- And as well I am thinking to focus much on sermons and preaching.
- They ask you this in school no?
- Yes. Can you give me your opinion?
- To preach mean to bring people to church and to Christ.
- I know that.
- But you don't have much trust in yourself.
- Can you read my sermon for next week?
- If is not 200 pages.
- Haha very funny.
- Where shall I email it?
- Well.....you can add as attachment on facebook
- A note?
- Here you go
- It lets me my version of word is not update to your.....
- Can you see pdf's?
- Yes....
- You have PDF?
- One moment.
- Yes....this I can read....I wrote many sermons of this type...they were lost after 11/9.
- Ah
- You need my opinion or grammar spelling?
- Not that.
- Well I did read one of your sermons in the past....on DEMONIACS.....good sermon.....but I don't think you are mature enough for that kind of stuff.....
- Hmm
- Well....you give me 5 minutes I will tell you my opinion
- Ok

- You can go to grocery store if you need to.

- Ok

- I will write my opinion on facebook inbox.

- Thanks

- Well you wanted my opinion. I finished reading it...here it is:....is a good sermon....and I would say that someone who has faith in God would come next Sunday to hear you again.....the bad thing is that many orthodox preachers want to say everything at once....and the people in church many times get lost.....The topic is PHILANTROPY OR ALMSGIVING.....I have read once a Orthodox Slavic writer....this man said that if you want to help the dead [their souls] you can do it by philanthropy in the name of the dead [the person you care]....so I think is good to know that....we can actually help the dead making philanthropy.....I like the think....is short and to the point

- Thanks Radu!!!

New Year 2014

- Radu how are you doing? Happy New Year!

- Hi Jordan....sorry to act with you like this. You must understand my situation. I am reluctant to talk to people on America brings to me memories that I am trying to escape: World Trade Center collapsing, war on terror, the times of the Osama bin Laden and his menace, army troops going to Afghanistan.....when I talk to Americans these memories come to me....if you can see in the list of my friends there are few Americans. Few people did approach me with me these issues on facebook...and I went mute. As well you have periods of silence when I don't know what to say as well.

- I'm sorry for all of this. Lord have mercy

- I promise I will stay in touch better. I appreciate your writings and insight into life

- You don't have to promise...but if you are a friend you can erase the image with WTC in flames...I get depressed when I see that pics.

- Do I have this image?

- If I have it I will delete it.

- I have to go to a meeting now Radu. I wish you a blessed day (or night).

- Thanks...all the best....

- You too.

- Radu, you think that Darth Vader is like a patriarch?

- Why?

- He claimed to be a father.

- Is the Russian Patriarch....is like something else there. Try to read between lines.

- Hahaha so funny

- I will make an complaint against you in Kremlin that you don't obey the Holy Patriarch of Russia.....he had nothing to do with the Cold war, Lenin, Stalin and the Communists.....

- He seems fine to me

- I can pass over many things...Stalin no....you saw my reaction

- What else can you tell me?

- Current Russian Patriarchate claims they had no ties with Stalin...is like saying Italy was not actually the Roman Empire

- Interesting.

- Maybe.....I have nothing against Russia...but you know what they say....things are not what they seem to be. What do you think on Elder Porphyrios Bairaktaris?

- I never meet with this man...I did read some of his books that is all....why do you ask?
- I must go to a meeting on him.
- I know few thins on Father Ephraim from Katunakia....he is dead....you can find books
- Oh yeah. I heard of him
- Clairvoyant....he could tell you your sins before
- Wow.

- Yes. One day a student went to visit him. Before the entered his monastery Father Ephraim greeted him: hello Nicholas. How you do know my name? God has revealed that to me while praying.

- So you say Father Ephraim knew his name without seeing him. This is a good story.

- So, today February 16th, their showed ARGO on TV.....interesting story....what I get from the picture is that IRAN is not the best country to visit....maybe my understanding is wrong.....Actually I was thinking to visit Middle East.....things don't show to be the best in that area as it seems

- You could probably get away with it being from Romania but as an American I would be concerned

- I was American for like 3 years.....9/11 changed everything

- Exactly.

- I will make you familiar with Saint Nektarios of Pentapolis. This is another saint. There is a good book on.....lots of history.....

- Yeah I would like to print that and read it sometime

- Well saints they are not national....otherwise Saint John Chrysostom would be a Turk.....

- He was from Byzantium.

- The space of Constantinople was on modern day Turkey.

- Things change.

- Yes.

- Sorry I have been on the computer too long I need a break

- Well Radu's "outstanding" thinking: from the past [history] all empires and superpowers collapsed due to that fact they did not know when to stop. Here it is: Macedonian Empire, Roman Empire, Persian Empire, Chinese Empire and so on. In 1453 Byzantium fell under the Islamic yoke, in 2001 America fell under the Middle East attacks. I am fine with that.

- We can say that 9/11 was a kamikaze thing.

- Why?

- Those who like to self destroy are called KAMIKAZE.....are you sure you are not one of them?

- Not sure.

- I was just kidding.

- Oh I see.

- There are many types of KAMIKAZE.....outside the WW2 who is a classical.....the American Wrestling Federation [whom I would shut down any time] is another case.....being a Kamikaze is not good.....

- Let's come back to the issue of philanthropy.

- I am all ears.

- In the Gospel a rich ruler tempts the Lord by asking, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The Lord responds by telling the rich ruler to sell all he has and to distribute his possessions to the poor and to come and follow Him. The Lord then goes on to say that it is

more difficult for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

- This is very much a comparison and it does not have to be taken for real.

- The Good News of our Lord is a gospel of love, sharing, and community for all of mankind. The Lord will not tolerate greed in His kingdom nor does He make it easy for those who are unwilling to share their wealth to follow Him. There is no way to sugar-coat the good news of Christ so that we may fulfill our desires without Christ-like selflessness.

- Those who wish to follow the Lord need to overcome their need to possess many things and love money. Those who want to lay hold of eternal life must trust the Lord to be their Lord and care for them as a loving Father when destitute, poor and needy.

- The Lord was us to rely on Him for our liveliness and to praise Him even despite financial crisis, hardship, and suffering as did the Prophet Job in the Old Testament of the Bible. Just a few weeks ago, the government was shut down because the national debt ceiling needed to be raised. Our society at large spends beyond its means. When I heard that the government was going to shut down it seemed that many began to worry over many things. However, I am sure that others were also worried when the government started back up!

- To curb the trends of greed our society must learn to give charitably even when our budgets are stretched thin. To disregard the words of our Lord on this topic is to neglect our own salvation. Christians must practice philanthropy. When we become philanthropic people we participate in the divine life of God.

- The Christian is a microcosm of creation and as the heart of each person beings to share in the love of God; the person begins to experience the unquenchable fire of God's love for His creation set ablaze by the Holy Spirit within the heart. The warmth of this fire is prayer and philanthropy.

- The Gospel teaches us to transform our greed into love for man. Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and bestowing life to those in the tombs.

- Christians should transform greed into philanthropy similarly as Christ transforms death into life!

- So, what do the Holy Fathers say on the benefits of philanthropic charity?

- They teach that almsgiving is one of the paramount tasks in pursuing a spiritual life. In the praxis of charity, we become co-creators with God and also add spiritual gravity and momentum to our lives. In fact, selfless giving gives us a whole new perspective on life. We may come to a new realization of how our possessions that may remain dormant on some shelves or in a closet are, in reality, tools of Christian philanthropy.

-St. John Chrysostom tells us: *I beg you, remember this without fail, that not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life; we do not possess our own wealth but theirs. If we have this attitude, we will certainly offer our money; and by nourishing Christ in poverty here and laying up great profit hereafter, we will be able to attain the good things which are to come, by the grace and kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- Choosing to share wealth and to live in such a philanthropic way is a holy task and brings a blessing upon Christian homes.

- Again, St. John speaks golden words saying: *Wherever money is stored up for the poor, that place is inaccessible to the demons; And the money that is collected together for almsgiving fortifies Christian homes more than a shield, spear, weapons, physical power, and multitudes of soldiers.* So sacred is the act of philanthropic almsgiving that not only does

philanthropy protect us, but it also brings a blessing and healing upon those who give of their wealth with an eager and joyful heart.

- St. Paul tells us that Christians *must give as they have decided in their hearts, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver!* Commenting on St. Paul, St. John Chrysostom explains how almsgiving affects us: *God appointed almsgiving not only for the needy to be nourished, but also for the providers to receive benefit, and much more so for the latter than the former. For if he considered only the interest of the poor, he would have commanded solely that the money be given and not have asked for the eagerness of the providers. But now you see the Apostle in every way ordering by will first and all for the givers to be joyful: the suppliers to furnish in a cheerful manner. And at one time he says, "Everyone must do as he has chosen in his heart, neither out of grief or necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver."* One story in the life of St. Basil the Great tells us a story of how we might live with an attitude of self-less and cheerful giving:

- In the year three hundred and sixty-eight, Kesaria was struck by a merciless string of disasters. Crop-wrecking hailstorms were followed by floods, an earthquake, and a draught. Famine was rampant and St. Basil berated the rich, who “let their wheat rot, while men die of hunger.”

- All of Basil’s own inherited property was sold and the money given to the poor. His constant personal outreach for the needy helped save the region. A few of the wealthy gave generously, but St. Basil was deeply embittered against the avaricious landowners, whose abundant wealth had to be twisted from them by begging and threats.

- That summer he walked through the barren countryside, feeding the poor with his own hands. Hammering relentlessly at the wealthy, he railed in his sermons, *“You refuse to give under the pretext that you haven’t got enough for your own requirements. But while your tongue excuses, your hand condemns - that ring shining on your finger silently declares you to be a liar! How many debtors could be released from prison with one of those rings? How many ill-clad people could be clothed from only one of your wardrobes? And yet you turn the poor away empty-handed.”* But St. Basil spared no one, further exclaiming: *“...You are poor? But there are others poorer than you. You have enough to keep you alive for ten days - but this man has only enough for one...Don’t be afraid to give away that little that you have. Don’t put your own interests before the common need. Give your last loaf to the beggar at the door, and trust in the goodness of God.”*

- St. Basil’s example gives us an example for philanthropy. His story teaches us that we should not let financial burdens or even reasonable excuses keep us from living virtuously and with love for all mankind.

- This Nativity season, we should secretly do some act of philanthropy and share the love of our risen Lord with others out of the goodness of a cheerful heart.

- Let us remember the sacred nativity of our infant Savior who descended into our world and completed the greatest act of humanitarian effort ever. Let us Love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength and with our all our mind love our neighbor as ourselves.

- Let us give glory to Christ together with His eternal Father and the all wholly good and life-creating Spirit now and forever and to the ages of ages.

- These are some very strong words.

- They are Radu, but this is what I believe.

- After hearing this I can grasp why you are thinking to travel to Africa.

- How did you figure out?
- Well you are willing to be a philanthropist.
- We should all be that.
- I do not think I share your optimism.
- Look around you.
- To see what?
- Our society encourages so to say a very individualistic way of living?
- You think that individualism is equaled with egotistic?
- Yes you can say that. Individualism is a shape of institutionalized egotism.
- I like the way you said it.
- You are welcomed.
- This brings to me another topic.
- Meaning you are thinking to something else?
- Yes. I do not know if you have seen the movie Amadeus?
- Amadeus? You mean Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart?
- Yes. Have you seen it?
- I may, but some long time ago.
- I am glad maybe you can tell me your opinion. That movie came out in 1984 or so.
- From what I recall the movie is an on going church confession of a suicidal Antonio Salieri, Mozart's friend and in the same time secret adversary.
- Well you see I have enjoyed that movie very much.
- Not bad. I do not see where you are getting at?
- The Amadeus movie brings into topic God's justice.
- God's justice?
- Exactly.
- I do not see how?
- Well, in the movie Salieri longs for the musical skills and gifts of Mozart, while Mozart who owns them is careless.
- I think you need to understand the theory of involvement.
- The theory of involvement?
- Yes. I don't think that Mozart was careless, I think that he did not share the same obsession as Salieri who was actually obsessed with being a great musician and a great composer.
- I am happy that I can talk to someone on Amadeus.
- Why?
- That movie opened in me many questions.
- And you are looking for answers?
- For quite some time.
- What I think is that what that movie is trying to bring into attention is the theme of envy.
- That too I guess, but is not so to say a biography of Mozart. Salieri comes into scene many times.
- Envy can drive someone into insanity and as well envy is a sin. It is always to look and to long for goods of others and not for your own goods.
- Are there many people like this?
- Now that you brought it into discussion, Salieri was one of those. His God given gifts were always inferior as compared to the others.

- You see, I saw that movie few times and I have a sense that I did not get it.
- Well, this is why you are talking it with me.
- That is right. You seem to understand very easy things.
- Well as I said, envy it is a sin and is it a deadly one.
- Salieri had a problem with God as well.
- The cause of that problem was very much envy as I said. He thought God is not just, that He is not fair so to say.
- You like how the movie had ended?
- If I recall Salieri walked into a lunatic's asylum proclaiming itself "a patron saint of mediocrity."
- How do you interpret that?
- Very unhappy.
- Why?
- Each one of us we have certain God given gifts. Some have bigger and some have smaller.
- Yes, but where are you getting at?
- As I said it is envy that makes us not to see our own gifts and longs for others' gifts.
- But that is not insanity?
- No is not, but it can lead to insanity.
- I see what you mean. Amadeus is one of my favorite movies of all times.
- I liked the thing, but I cannot say is one of my favorites.
- I find it very much educational.
- Well, I think that all movies should be like that. People go to movies not just for entertainment for as well to learn something.
- You are a moviegoer?
- You can say that, but I am aware that not all movies are the same.
- You mean that there are good movies and bad movies?
- That too. A good movie has to have a message, has to have something to say.
- I think all movies have something to say.
- No. Today many movies are made just for promotion: actors, brands, corporations or products.
- So you don't like commercial movies?
- Yes. I feel my time is wasted.
- Radu I just want to let you know that soon I will be going in Tanzania Africa.
- If that is your wish.
- I will have some Christian activities there.
- They are not Christians?
- They are but they need help.
- Your help?
- America's help.
- I am not sure about that.
- Why?
- Well you see in the past these African countries have asked for help?
- Did they get it?
- Yes they did, but to no use.
- Why?

- Well with all the aid they get, financial and material they very much wasted and did not invest it.
- Maybe they did not know to invest it?
- They did. These Africans they like to spend not to work.
- I am doing this for Christ.
- You asked my opinion of you going to Tanzania.
- I appreciate your opinion.
- Good.
- As I told you I am going there within the church.
- I don't like to say it, but Africa is what they call in economics a 3rd world land.
- I know that.
- But you still want to go there.
- I think I can do a good for the church.
- I don't know, I heard a story of a hunter and a wild beast. A hunter and his aid went with his rifle in the forest to hunt a wild best.
- Go one, I can hear you, I just have some stuff to do.
- So, the wild best is hiding. When the hunter did not pay attention, the wild best came from the bushes and attacked him. He fell on the ground bleeding. What is the moral of the story?
- I don't know. Not a good one. You tell me.
- It is not good just to have guts; you have to pay attention around you.
- I think you are pushing things to far.
- The issue here is if you think you can face an African country.
- I think I can.

Meanwhile Jordan went to Africa. Next talk was with Jordan in Africa and me in Europe.

- Hello my friend.
- Hi there....there is you

- Here I am
- In Tanzania.....I was scared some gorillas may attack you....they have gorillas there?
- No only in the jungle.
- OK....be careful.....
- And how is your stay there? I deduce from what you are posting you like it there
- It was a good time
- I did not have time to see your photos...I will take a look later.
- Thanks.
- The idea is that you had good time...Africa was created by God as well.
- Indeed
- And you are ready from Christmas
- Eh. I will be when finals and papers are done
- Yes...take it easy....no hurry with school.....
- Thanks
- One of my former professors from Saint Tikhon's went to Tanzania some 4 years ago. He wrote a paper.
- I'd like to read it if possible.
- We can make things possible if we want to....
- Many have asked what our team will be accomplishing on the 2-week OCMC teaching team to Tanzania. During our time there we will be teaching lessons on Orthodox Christian

catechism including but not restricted to: the Bible, Saints, Holy Tradition, the Fathers, Holy Sacraments, and much more. We will be sharing cultural aspects of our faith and American heritage. We will also give our hosts Icons, Bibles, and other items for their devotional use.

- This is very good.
- This is not my first time in Tanzania.
- I think you told me.
- Last year, I was able to speak on many topics including: Creation, the Fall, Christian Anthropology, the Bible, Fasting and Feasting, Marriage, the Holy Trinity, Monasticism, and others. I was also able to engage the Tanzanians through American music, Byzantine music, and American sports. Our team was able to bring Frisbees, footballs, soccerballs, marshmallows, and other outdoor items that are unheard of in their country.

- So you are helping these people.

- This summer we will be giving classes in Tanzania on many of the same topics as well as giving sermons to the local Church community as well as keeping the relationship in Christ alive between our national Orthodox Churches.

Thank you for your prayers and support!

- I will do my best as far as I can. But I told you I am not happy with this.

- No is fun. As a part of a teaching team to Bukoba, Tanzania we will participate in the annual seminar for church leaders and young adults by offering basic catechism and encouragement to the faithful.

- This sounds good.

- Yes. We will experience the culture and zeal of Orthodox Tanzanians, where less than fifty clergy, two hundred catechists and 50,000 faithful share the life-saving message of salvation with others.

- Man you are dedicated to the Church.

- Since 2004, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center has sent Mission Teams to participate in an annual seminar hosted by the Holy Metropolis of Mwanza. The 2011 Tanzania Teaching Team has been invited to teach at the annual seminar once again. Those who attend the seminars will come from different parts of the Metropolis. This event educates and encourages many around the Metropolis as they see the solidarity of the Orthodox Church which spans both culture and race.

- So you are saying that you don't care for race.

- Not at all. You think Christ would?

- That is an open question.

- Why?

- We cannot know exactly what Christ would do.

- It does not make sense to me.

- We cannot talk for Christ unless Christ does it for itself.

- You don't like Africa.

- There were some monks from Mont Athos who did lots of mission in Africa.

- Where in Africa?

- I think it was Zair or so.

- Do you know who from Mont Athos?

- I think it was a father called Damascenes.

- You know him?

- I do.

- And what did he tell you?
 - He told me that magic and sorcery is very common in African lands.
 - He was right.
 - So you are thinking to be some kind of missionary?
 - It that is the case.
 - Well we know in the Bible that Saint Paul was a missionary.
 - I do not think I can compare myself to Saint Paul.
 - Yes. Saint Paul has made lots of mission in the Mediterranean area.
 - There were different times and different people at that time.
 - It is like 2000 years ago.
 - You like Saint Paul?
 - All I have is his image from the writings in the Bible.
 - He had lots of zeal so to say.
 - It is very sad how he ended.
 - You are saying you don't like that he was decapitated by Emperor Nero?
 - Yes. It was he who actually wanted Saint Paul dead.
 - That brings into discussion Roman Empire.
 - What about Roman Empire?
 - It was Roman Empire after all who crucified Christ.
 - A big mistake.
 - Yes. You think it would have been different if America was on the map at that time?
 - Oh yea. America was not yet discovered at the times of Christ.
 - But you see America was in a way born as a Christian nation.
 - Why is that?
 - Well meanwhile in Europe emperor Constantine the Great came and he said that Christianity is the true religion or so to say the "right connection" with God.
- So you are saying that America has inherited Christianity from the outside?
- There are many Americans who think that Christianity is actually born in America and that is not true.
 - Christianity was brought so to say by immigrants.
 - Yes. From my data the first Orthodox Church to be built in North America was in Florida.
 - Florida? That is way south.
 - Greeks came and settled in Florida in a city called New Smyrna.
 - New Smyrna?
 - Yes. The first Orthodox Church to be built in America was in New Smyrna.
 - I have not been there.
 - Neither did I but I made some research on this topic.
 - Should we be concerned with the Orthodox Church in North America?
 - Yes. There is no room for Jehovah Witnesses.
 - There is a sectarian spirit in North America.
 - That is not good.
 - This spirit we call it American.
 - There is always time for improvement.
 - I want to talk with you more on my trip to Tanzania.
 - Go ahead. Do you that there is a Father Alexander Schmemann diary or journal?

- I heard something.
 - Sure.....Father Schmemann wrote a diary with all his trips...the man traveled quite a lot...from Alaska to Middle East and so on. This is why we know that Father Schmemann was a big theologian...he wrote...we have things from him. Otherwise no one would remember him.
 - What are you suggesting?
 - You should start writing as well.
 - Yeah
- Well I am boring you with my theories but Father Schmemann was big for me. He died when I was 5 years old in a way I am a theologian from his age.
- Ah, I see.
 - Orthodox Church was blessed to have him in the 20th century.... He did lots of good to many people
 - Yeah agreed
 - We will end soon....then you are happy?
 - What do you mean end?
 - I have some work to do.....I am always in time crisis....
 - Oh I see.
 - I think that you have to think to Tanzania as a LIFE EXPERIENCE....probably not the best experience but that is how life is....with bad and good things.
 - Yes. We have to pass through many things in our life.
 - I am glad that you think this way.
 - I like this quote from saint Paul 1 Philippians, 1, 3-11: "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."
 - In what context?
 - In the context to making something for the church of Christ.
 - Well then, you see yourself as a missionary?
 - I would like to.
 - It is not surprising then that you like Saint Paul. He was a missionary.
 - Yes. I know. He traveled a lot.
 - Maybe 10 to 15 countries.
 - But they were ancient countries.
 - That is a lot for a man I guess.
 - It is. In Saint Paul we can say that you have an opened road so to say.
 - People don't like saints much in our days.
 - That is not good.
 - Radu I have many times a feeling that we live in world that feels saints are inconvenient.
 - That is not something new.

- How?

- Christians have been persecuted for 300 years in the Roman Empire.

- 300 years. That is quite a lot.

- I know a story on persecutions.

- What story?

- It is said that in those days, a persecution man came to a Christian priest asking him to baptize his child. The priest thought that he was kidding. No I am not kidding, said the persecution man. I just want my child to be happier than me.

- So you are saying that this man has persecuted Christians all his life time and then he wanted his son to be baptized as Christian.

- Yes.

- That is interesting.

- You see, all these 300 years persecution people know that they are doing something wrong.

- But they still did it.

- Adam and Eve said that are not guilt for their sin when God asked them for their actions.

- I don't know it is unbelievable: 300 years of antichristian persecution.

- Light has nothing to do with darkness.

- I don't know if I told you that in Tanzania, most likely in the agricultural district of Muleba, there were some Finish people.

- What they were doing there?

- The same thing as we did.

- Religion.

- Tanzanians were hospitable.

- They were?

- They paid for all the food.

- You like Tanzanian food?

- Yes.

- Last year when I went there I took with me Holy Oil from Saint John Maximovitch of San Francisco, American Flags and Bibles. I gave to each participant a Bible.

- Very good.

THE NECESSITY OF DIALOGUE FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

- Radu, I see that you stress the need for talk, for dialogue.

- Yes I do. We are to avoid any kind of fundamentalism.

- I can understand that, but what makes you so sure that dialogue is the right method?

- Do you have in mind something else?

- Yes I do. Action.

- There are many types of action.

- I mean by that as I said I need to make my church grow by action. This is why I am a part of some missionary organizations.

- The one from Florida?

- Yes. I am happy I can put my energy into something positive.

- To tell you why I think dialogue is a good method, I must tell you I do not think I am Plato, but I learned something valuable from his philosophy.

- You mean Plato the Philosopher?
- That is right. He mentioned that a true philosopher is a man of dialogue.
- But we are not philosophers.
- Christianity is not against philosophy, true philosophy.
- Why do you say philosophy and true philosophy?
- There are many who think are philosophers but in fact they are not.
- I see what you are saying.
- You are familiar with Cuba?
- Is an island next to America?
- Well, in Cuba, back in the '60's Castro installed a "revolutionary" regime.
- I think I heard about it.
- It is long time from then but I think that we should learn our lesson.
- What lesson?
- That we cannot dialogue with a tyranny.
- You are saying that you could not talk with Cuba during Castro.
- Many have attempted but there was no way.
- It was during cold war.
- Yes and Cubans have exploited at maximum this fact.
- In fact in Cuba there was no revolution, it was a dictatorship.
- But they made you think they were revolutionary.
- How can you maintain a 30 years revolution?
- You are saying Cuba was 30 years in revolution?
I am saying that they wanted the world to believe that.
- Tyrants and dictators is not a very pleasant topic.
- As I told you, many times and most of the times there is no talk or no dialogues with dictators.
- What do you mean exactly by dialogue with a dictator?
- I mean that by a dialogue the person is truly opened to the other person.
- There are degrees in being opened to others.
- Cuba was an island that was not opened for 30 years.
- That is not funny.
- Well, Soviet Union sided with Cuba, they brought nuclear devices there.
- Cold war was is in a way a mystery to me.
- Cold war has changed the way we see adversity in our world.
- Why is that?
- Economy became so to say a way to dominate the world.
- That is old stuff.
- Yes. America won the cold war but that is not the main point here.
- Why?
- In cold war man started to make some kind of an idol from economy.
- I see what you mean.
- Many think that idolatry is an ended chapter in the history of mankind but in fact is not.
- What types of idolatry you are thinking?
- You are familiar with the term of hedonism?
- Pursuit of pleasure?

- Not just pleasure, infinite pleasure.
- Yes. I can see what you mean by hedonism but that is the connection with idolatry.
- There are many today who bow their knee not in front of God but in front of the idol of pleasure.
- So idolatry is still present.
- Yes but in a subtler shape: hedonism.
- But this includes the low class or the unserious.
- There are high political figures that have an idol in hedonism.
- What can we do about that?
 - We can bring these people back to orthodoxy, back to what is rational and what is normal.
- I don't think this is an easy thing to do.
- Orthodoxy has the potential to save people.
- I am not so optimistic as far that is concerned.
- Why you say that?
- America is far away from being orthodox.
- Funny to say that.
- Why?
- How do you explain that during Stalin America sides with the Russian Orthodox Church?
- I think that is just a coincidence.
- I don't think so. In its conscience America was to do the right thing.
- And what is the right thing?
- Well during Soviets the right thing what to help the church survive.
- Radu, Cold war is not my interest.
- Neither mine, but now that the thing is over we can make conclusions.
- What would be the conclusion according to you?
- One main conclusion is that we should not make economy an idol.
- Who said that?
- You don't have to say all the time a thing, you just do it.
- So you are saying that we should be as much as possible temperate as far as economy is concerned?
- Yes. For some, God is not the meaning of life but economical prosperity. Some would even kill and take life or make wars in the name of economical prosperity.
- So you are saying that during cold war people crossed the line a bit?
- Yes. Orthodoxy is related with the notion of equilibrium. We should keep equilibrium.
- Is this equilibrium static or active?
- Is it very active, dynamic.
- You think orthodoxy is dynamic?
- Yes it is, but is not about a material dynamics.
- Then what kind of dynamics?
- Orthodoxy is very much equilibrium between spirit and matter.
- This is not like a dualism?
- Orthodoxy is far way from being dualistic. The tragedy is that for many there is a dualism between matter and spirit.
- What is most important: matter or spirit?

- Spirit is more important. This is why hedonism is wrong.
- You were saying that during Cold War America sided with the Russian Orthodox Church.
- Yes.
- Why you think we did that?
- It was the right thing to do at that time.
- But how about now?
- Many say it was a mistake.
- But what you think?
- Soviet Union was an atheist state; religion was major problem for them. It was as they said opium for the people. It is still to appreciate that America offered so to say a Diaspora for the orthodox Russians at that time. It is what I call being fair play.
- Radu you are setting things in a new perspective.
- That means I am a man who calculate things and who does not take things for granted.
- So you came to the conclusion that dictators don't dialogue.
- That is correct. They just idolize themselves and their opinions that become so to say an absolute.
- I do not know if I told you but from school I am in a program related to drinking problems.
- You are dealing with what they say drunkards?
- Yes. I am part of an association that is called alcoholics anonymous.
- That is good. Do you think you can handle the thing?
- Well, I think I do.
- I do know that what to tell you on that Jordan. The holy fathers say that there is a demon of alcohol that is called Bacchus.
- So you see the spiritual causes of the drunkards.
- I am trying to.
- This is why this organization is so to say anonymous. It is very hard to make drunkards aware that they have a problem.
- There is a story on that, I do not know if you heard.
- No I would be glad to hear it.
- Well. It is said that there was this TV reporter who wanted to make a TV interview on the life of the people in the country side. So he went in the country side and he entered a bar. Here he found an old man sitting as the table.
- How is your say sir?
- Good. Thanks.
- Do you mind if ask you few questions?
- No go a head.
- How is your name?
- Joe, I am called as well old Joe.
- Joe is it very nice to meet with you.
- How do you spend a usual day?
- I woke up in the morning and I take a glass of vodka. They I go to feed my pigs. I come back in my house and I take another glass of vodka.

- You know something Joe, we are from a television and this thing is going to be seen by many people. So can you say that you were reading the paper and not drinking?
- Why?
- I do not think that people want to know how much you are drinking. So when you say that you were drinking say that you were reading or doing something like reading.
- OK I get it.. Well I woke up in the morning and I read the paper. Then I go to feed my pigs. After that I read the paper again. Then I take 2 or 3 books to read them again. Afternoon is coming and I take lunch while reading the news paper. Then I read 2 or 3 magazines. Then is time to bring back my cows from the field. Evening is coming so I go with my friend Jackie to the public library to read some other books. The library is closed at 10 so after that we all go to our friend Zack who has a printing machine under his house from some other proof reading.
- Hahahahaahha. Radu this is very funny.
- Yes. There are many people like that.
- What I can to conclude is that is very hard to word with drunkards.
- They do what they do in full freedom so there is no excuse.
- What do you think would be some good methods to stop drinking?
- I do not have a drinking problem so is hard for me to say something.
- You know that they drink in Greece as well.
- Yes. They have in Greece a drink that is called ouzo or so.
- And in Russia they have vodka which is a very strong drink.
- Drunkards bring in discussion the notion of sin.
- Yes I can see why.
- Well, first there is a mechanism of sin.
- What kind of mechanism?
- Sin always presents itself as something good. In fact is just an appearance.
- Well, it is not good to sin.
- This is the moral aspect of the problem that few choose to consider it.
- So you say that we should not “dialogue” with sin.
- Many people don’t even have the notion of sin.
- That is very sad.
- But as the holy fathers saw, sin is always connected with the notion of pleasure.
- And that is not good?
- Pleasure is good if it does not create dependence.
- What kind dependence are you talking about?
- Sinful dependence that is what I am saying.
- Well drunkards know that very well.
- What it very important is to make people know that pleasure is not above God.
- I do not get what you are saying.
- I am saying that pleasure is not quite the meaning of life.
- So in sin the meaning of life becomes pleasure?
- Yes. Pleasure to eat, pleasure to have sex, pleasure to have fame, pleasure to get angry.
- This is so difficult.
- The technique of sin is always by the rapport pleasure-dependence.
- But that is natural so to say.

- No is not. There is logic of sin that is very much wrong and that is bases on distortion.
- So you are seeing a difference between sin and passion?
- That is right?
- What is the difference?
- Sin is very much like a parasite in us. It feeds on our souls and bodies. To do this it has to hide.
- Where?
- In us, and most of the time my attacking our morals.
- There are low moral standards in the world today.
- This is what I am talking about.
- How can we increase so to say the moral awareness?
- There are many ways but one of the most safe is very much prayer.
- You think that prayers help?
- Yes I think it does.
- Why?
- Well I do know this that for instance if you go to someone who is a drunkard you can say to him: look before you start to drink say an "Our father."
- No I don't.
- I don't know if you know that there is a story on that theme.
- What story?
- It is said that in the 20th century Saint Siluan the Athonite was traveling in the train. He stood next to a man who was smoking. The man engaged saint Siluan in a talk.
- You see I do not think that smoking is really a sin.
- Why?
- What is bad about it?
- It is the passion. Once you start smoking you cannot quit.
- If you think so, I don't.
- Do you pray before smoking?
- No. So you see if you cannot pray then is a sin.
- Radu this is an interesting story.
- Yes I think it is.
- So you were saying that while dealing with sin prayer helps a lot.
- Yes I do.
- Why?
- Saint Gregory Palama said something interesting in the Middle Ages.
- What?
- He said that there are uncreated energies that God has to share with us that can work for us.
- Uncreated energies?
- Yes. Grace is very much an uncreated energy.
- So we pray to God to help us escape sins and passions.
- That is very right.
- I think we are getting very technical but I like it.
- You see, sin produces in us so to say a minus.
- What minus?
- A lack, a gap, a moral uncertainty.

- I can see what you mean.
- This lack is so to say potentially healed by the uncrated energies of God.
- These energies or grace, which you are talking about, does not come by itself?
- No they don't
- We have to ask God to give them to us.
- How we do that?
- We do that by prayer Jordan.
- That's the way to go about it?
- Yes.
- There is no other way?
- According to Bible no.
- But what if we pray and we do not escape sin?
- That is another issue.
- Why?
- It is up how deeply enrooted a sin may be in us.
- So sin can take roots in us?
- Yes. This is how evil men are coming into this world.
- Sin is not necessarily evil.
- Sin it is always evil.
- What makes you think this way?
- Sin is the thing that separates us from God.
- This is a good definition of sin.
- Yes. To be fully operational sin presents itself as something good.
- Now I see what you mean that sin is so to say a minus in existence.
- Correct. Prayer is a way to defeat sin that leads to passion.
- That is very much as a reply from Star wars.
- You do like Star wars.
- Yes I do. It is something very American.
- Well I have no problem with that.
- You see I am in my last year in Holy Cross
- You told me that.
- I discovered that there is much lie in the Greeks and mostly the Greek Orthodox Church.
- You like the Greek Church?
- Yes I do.
- That is very good.
- For me Greek Church means a lot.
- Well it has a past and a history and I think that is good.
- I have studied a lot on the Greek Church.
- Well, the Greek Church is not the same as outside Greece.
- You mean the Diaspora?
- Yes.
- We have all kinds of students here in Holy Cross.
- Try to relate with them.
- Is very different as from Tennessee University.
- You are so to say in a theological school.

- It bothers me that Greeks have all these past saints while we don't in America.
- There are few American saints.
- How much do you think that a church is defined by saints?
- They play an important role.
- It cannot be a church without saints?
- There cannot be a movie without actors.
- I like way you said it.
- The pleasure is mine.
- What can you tell me on Greek saints?
- There is much to say. Let us not forget that New Testament was written in ancient Greek.
- Yes. That is so true. But tell me on the Greek saints.
- Well a figure that is so to say controversial in the Greek Church is very much Saint Dionysus the Areopagite.
- He is not agreed as saints by all.
- Saint Dionysius is a saint in the Greek Orthodox Church.
- What is controversial about him?
- His writings and mostly a book that he wrote: Celestial hierarchy.
- I heard about that book.
- Very good. Some say that this book is too advanced for the 1st century.
- What do you mean advanced?
- It has a style and a genre that is not seen to other saints of the first century.
- Then Saint Dionysius is a saint only in the Greek Church?
- He is a saint only in the Orthodox Church.
- I see. What other saints do you know?
- Well I told you on saint Nektarios of Pentapolis.
- He is as well a Greek saint?
- Yes. He lived in the 20th century.
- What is to know on him?
- I think I gave you a book to read on his life.
- Yes. I know that author of that book.
- So you know PMK Strongylis?
- Yes. He told me once that he will write a book on saint Nektarios of Pentapolis.
- It is not actually a book but more a doctoral these written in 1994 in England at the University of Durham.
- I cannot remember exactly.
- Well, you have to read the book.
- I think I will.
- Good. Saint Nektarios is so to say a person that people don't pay much attention.
- What does the world pays attention today?
- Lots of things, saints not so much.
- Radu, how do you see that economy is not so good in the orthodox countries?
- At present or all the time?
- All the time.
- I do not think that is very true.
- Why?

- There were times when economy was good in the orthodox countries.
- There were?
- Yes. Let us remember the times of the mid 20th century. There were many orthodox countries that had a fully functional economy.
- That is true, but I heard many complain on the fact that orthodox lands don't concern much with economy.
- That may be true.
- What do you think that needs to be done to improve economy in the orthodox countries.
- In the orthodox countries we can say that there is a different ethos as from the western countries.
- You think that orthodoxy is against economic prosperity?
- No but there is always the sin of gluttony.
- What do you do then with the countries in the 3rd world?
- Well most of the times there people still one from another and this is why economy is working well.
- We have discussed this before, economy is not important to you?
- It is important as much as it takes care of my needs but I see in it a limited role.
- West is better when it comes to economy.
- There are other factors when we talk on economy.
- What other factors?
- What you need to know is that there was a 400 years Turkish yoke in the orient and that kind of fact slowed down things in this area.
- You are saying the Ottoman Empire.
- Yes. That is right.
- So while East was under ottoman yoke West was very much free.
- Ottomans we can say they were destructive. They cared only for their own limited interest.
- I see what you mean. We need to talk more on the orient and occident to find a conclusion.
- This is an old topic.
- You think so?
- I do. There are lots written on east and west.
- In the last period of time the occident was always good in economy.
- It may take a while for the orthodox countries to adjust.
- Some think it takes too much.
- You see, that it is very true that protestant reformation was very much based on economical reasons.
- Why?
- The Netherlands wanted to do better and the Catholics did not let them.
- That may be the case. Protestants are outdated?
- Why?
- We talk today in neo-protestants.
- That is a different story?
- You think they are based on economical principles in their actions?
- No I don't.

- So you see, bad economy is just temporary in the orthodox world.
- Let us hope it is so.
- There is always hope I guess.
- That is correct.
- Radu, tell me your honest opinion on the ecumenical Patriarch.
- Well current patriarch is Bartholomew.
- No I mean the ecumenical patriarchate.
- There are many things that we can say about that.
- Just tell me a few.
- Ecumenical patriarchate has a very long history and it is very much soothing that is not appreciated today.
- You like that ecumenical patriarchate is in Turkey?
- At the time ecumenical patriarchate was founded America neither was nor even on the map.
- We feel that ecumenical patriarchate neglects us in America.
- America is not an orthodox country so they are not so much concerned with this country.
- We know that American Patriarchate is very old.
- Yes it is. There is no question on that.
- In the same time many think that there is no room for ecumenical patriarchate in the world today.
- Why is that?
- Patriarchate is seen to say not as an expression of the faith in God the father but very much as an antifeminist movement.
- Is feminism of concern to you?
- To a certain extent.
- To what extent?
- Well, in England they have women bishops and that is not quite right.
- You don't agree with the ordination of women.
- No.
- Why?
- We have to stay very much with the tradition and what is traditional.
- And you are saying the ordination of women is not traditional?
- Exactly.
- But women have right as well.
- I do not think that we have to cross beyond that is said in tradition and the Bible.
- Many think that orthodoxy sees things too narrow.
- The truth is not convenient to those who lie.
- So you think that the ecumenical patriarchate still has a function for our times?
- Yes.
- What is that?
- To know and to experience our own tradition.
- You like to stay in a tradition?
- In the same way I like to have faith in God.
- It is hard to say is there is a tradition in America.
- Well, there are few people that agree with the ecumenical patriarchate in America.

- Many times people think in America that ecumenical patriarchate is the same with the pope.
- No they are not the same.
- You like papacy.
- I never was for papacy.
- Why?
- It is a heresy.
- Funny that in the past papacy found other guilty of heresy but not itself.
- That is not funny is an irony.
- Yes that is true.
- People have to make a distinction between papacy and the ecumenical patriarchate.
- That is not made many times.
- This is so because many like ignorance.
- It may be so.
- The truth is that many do know that even what is ecumenical.
- You mean the word?
- Yes.
- Well as I know ecumenical is very much civilization.
- That is correct. Ecumenical tells you that the church deals with civilization.
- So the church is not against civilization.
- Very true.
- This was something in the past.
- There are many who claim they are ecumenical without knowing the meaning of the word.
- Is it the same thing to be ecumenical and to be ecumenist?
- No. Ecumenist is a kind of wrong thing to do, very much like syncretism.
- An ecumenical church means very much a civilized church.
- That is something that I have not thought about much.
- There is always time to think to it.
- Then ecumenical is not the same with catholic?
- No. Universal is something else that ecumenical.
- What exactly?
- Ecumenical means that the church is very much opened towards the world around.
- So the Orthodox Church is not so to say a catholic thing.
- That is for certain.
- But why an ecumenical patriarch and not an ecumenical pope?
- Here is the mistake or so to say the heresy.
- The pope is not ecumenical?
- Being ecumenical means that you are open towards the other as equals.
- Something that papacy is not?
- You see, the ecumenical patriarch is very much a honorary title.
- Why?
- The ecumenical patriarch is very much the patriarch of Greece and Turkey of today.
- But someone has to be in charge of things.
- When an ecumenical synod meets, ecumenical patriarch presides this meeting as one of the equals.

- This is something that the pope does not.
- Right. This is why there is still a catholic church and an orthodox church.
- These are things that are not so to say known in America.
- You see in church the pope does not claim that he is one of the equals; he claims he is the superior to all.
- That is wrong.
- Sure it is.
- I have followed very much the relations between the ecumenical patriarch and the papacy.
- That is a very long subject.
- We are not going to get into it. What is your opinion?
- Orthodox Church agrees that the pope is bishop of Rome and Patriarch of Italy, something that papacy has declined in the last period of time.
- There is no way to go back.
- There is, but this is not the case in Vatican.
- In few days I will graduate.
- Jordan I am happy for you.
- Thanks, it means a lot to me.
- I hope you will find your way after you graduate.
- I hope so.
- What would you like to do the most?
- To serve the church.
- That is very good.
- I feel I can do many things for the Orthodox Church.
- I am sure you will have this chance.
- Things are very tense now in my life.
- There is time to come back to normal.
- That is true.
- I am happy you keep your options opened.
- I feel I can do things better.
- There are many ways to serve God. Church is one of them.
- Yes it is. What do you think I should do?
- Do what you think you can do best. And there is one more thing.
- What thing?
- Well remember what Lord Jesus Christ said: "it is not you who elected Me, but I elected you."
- Thank you for your words.
- You are welcomed.

BETWEEN ORIENT AND OCCIDENT

- Hi Radu, what up?
- I am fine. How you being doing?
- I am still thinking to Africa.
- You start again.
- You don't like Africa.

- I think we have talked on that.
- Africans are not like us.
- They are called Africans for good reasons.
- They wrote me again from Tanzania.
- Good for them.
- I am thinking in going back to Africa.
- Jordan you are not an African.
- I fell I can make more mission in Africa.
- If that is what you feel what I can say.
- African airlines are not that bad.
- If you say so.
- My professors in Holy Cross said that it was good I went to Africa.
- It may affect your grades who knows.
- Well Africans are not orthodox.
- That is something I know.
- I have to write a paper on my trip to Africa. Do you want to read it?
- If you want me so.
- I will give it to you these days.
- Sure, no problem. This summer after a graduate I will go to another country in Africa.
- You mentioned something on Kenya.
- Yes. I ended with Tanzania.
- Good. What can I say?
- I do not ask you to evaluate my actions.
- I would not presume that.
- You still can give me feed back.
- We all need that I guess.
- What I can conclude is that you like traveling.
- Yes I do.
- You like to explore?
- I do, but there is not much to explore.
- That is true. You know something?
- Exploring is in a way a method to find God.
- Why?
- Well, the search of what is beyond is many times what we can say a search for God.
- We can say that God is beyond, He is in heaven.
- That is true.
- What do you think of your visit to Turkey?
- I have been to some ancient cities of Turkey such as Ephesus.
- Ephesus, that is interesting.
- You think?
- I do.
- Why?
- Ephesus was so to say an important center of the ancient world.
- Yes. They had in Ephesus a famous library.
- I know that. What is of concern to me is the relation between Orient and Occident.
- Why?

- You see, some say that there is no connection between orient and occident.
- That is not true.
- In fact occident started in orient.
- We Americans wanted so to say independence from the rest.
- And from the orient?
- Hard to say that.
- What do you mean?
- There is an educated side of Americans who are aware that we came from the orient or from the east.
- And that is the truth.
- But in the same time in America there is a class of people who think we came out of nowhere.
- Independence is good but not absolute independence.
- I see what you mean.
- You see Jordan there is an aspect in American history that I do not understand very well.
- What aspect?
- Americans took independence from the British.
- Yes, we had a war with the British.
- But then America still uses English as main language.
- I think that is just a conventional fact.
- You think so?
- Yes. I do.
- If it is to go by the truth Americans and Native Americans do not call God, God but Manitou.
- Yes. Manitou is the name of God in the language of the of Native Americans.
- I think that we should be very careful when it comes to the name of God.
- Yes. You are right.
- Now to come back to the issue of orient and occident opinions is separated.
- I think I can understand that.
- I think I have my own opinion as far as that is concerned.
- What is your opinion?
- My opinion is that orient and occident are so to say complementary to each other.
- Can you be so to say specific?
- Yes. I can. In the same way as there is no school without professors and students, there is no world without orient and occident.
- So you are so to say for a unity or union of the orient and occident.
- We live in times where we have to find that is common or so to say what belong to each one of us.
- It is an interesting approach.
- This separation between orient and occident is not good.
- Why?
- Division is not something that comes from God.
- I see what you mean.
- Both orient and occident claim that are best.
- And is not so?

- There are good things in orient and good things in occident.
- What are those?
- Well for instance orient is good in faith and religion.
- And occident?
- It shows a sense of good economics.
- We have approached this issue before.
- Yes we did, but we can still dig in it for a while.
- Well you see in America I went to a Hellenic school which is so to say oriental.
- We have to establish the right parameters.
- What are those?
- The right parameters are that we need to create a climate of dialogue between orient and occident?
- Is this not what are we doing right now?
- Yes. But we can still have to make people believe that are worthy to create dialogue and unity between orient and occident.
- We are talking here on the facts that are many who think that is good that the world is divided in two major sections.
- Yes. That was the case with the cold war.
- Occident started in orient. Occident is a kind of need for the orient to self perfect itself.
- It is an aspect of the matter. What else do you have in mind?
- Dialogue is not expensive.
- In America there are many organizations that want so to say a connected world.
- That is good but we must be realistic. We do not have to expect much.
- There are many who think that orient and occident cannot be reunited.
- America claims to be the center of the occident.
- You think that is not good?
- It can be good with the condition of dialogue.
- Many Americans don't want to dialogue.
- It is childish the will of Americans to dominate the world.
- We have the money.
- The idea is not to dominate the world is to unite the world.
- Hm...I must think some more.
- Yes it is funny that back in the '60's Jacqueline Kennedy who was the wife of the president Kennedy remarried a Greek.
- What Greek?
- Aristotle Onassis.
- Well, it seems that there is a dialogue between orient and occident.
- Yes. We can be certain of that.
- So our aim is to unite the world.
- That is true. There were 2 world wars in the 20th century. We cannot let that happen again.
- I see what you mean. World wars were a big tragedy.
- Yes they were and there are many who advocate a third world war.
- My God.
- In fact in 2001 world was on the verge of a 3rd world war.

- You mean the terrorists.
- Yes. We are in the 21st century and we have not overcome the problem of terrorism.
- How do you explain that terrorism is mainly a Middle East issue thus an oriental one.
- This is not true. There were many terrorist groups in the west as well. See for instance Ireland.
- What about Ireland?
- Have you heard of IRA?
- No, never heard of it.
- IRA is an Irish terrorist group who militated in the 20th century for the independence of Ireland from Great Britain.
- I think I heard something now that you mentioned.
- Yes. So terrorism is common to orient and occident.
- Many say that orient is too soft and so to say outdated.
- In certain aspects it is so. Orient gave to the world Soviet Union.
- What do you think of the word separatism?
- It is very much based on the principle: divide et impera?
- What is that?
- Divide and dominate.
- America used that many times.
- There is always the danger that powerful states to become so to say terrorist states.
- You mean the state that try to control the world?
- Yes there is an ongoing war in that area. If is not Italy is Spain, if is not Spain is Canada, if is not Canada is China and so on.
- China is a country that is hard to define.
- Is not even a Christian country.
- What does it mean Christian for you?
- Well do you know exactly from where the word Christian comes?
- It is a Greek word.
- Yes. The word Christian it comes from the Greek Christ Χριστός which is the equivalent for the Hebrew word Messiah.
- Well we have the English word messianic.
- Is not the same thing.
- Why?
- The Greek language has a slightly different notion.
- What notion?
- Well in Hebrew Messiah means Savior. In Greek Christ it means savior but as well chosen, anointed, the elected one.
- So you are saying that Greek is richer as far as Christ is concerned.
- That is for sure. Christ in Greek comes from the “anointed one.” This was a custom that when a king was elected he was anointed with precious myrrh.
- This is no longer in use today.
- In a literal sense, to be a Christian means to be an anointed king.
- What does that mean?
- A high calling.
- Radu, this has been a very useful conversation.

- 90% of people use the word Christian without knowing what it really means. But as I said there is a second sense of the word Christian. That sense relates to the fact of being chosen.
- You are saying that we are chosen by God?
- In a way. God is the ones who ask us to have a communion with Him.
- Then to be a Christian means in a way to be chosen by God?
- Yes. The truth is that are many who call themselves Christians and actually do not live a Christian life.
- I took few classes on that topic.
- Yes. What we have to know that is most of the time Christianity is very much something outdated today.
- You mean the ritual?
- Yes. To be a Christian you have to attend church, to pray to fast, to go to confession and many other things like that.
- You are saying that being Christian is not the same thing with being a moral person?
- They are two separate things.
- But they are not contradictory?
- No they are not.
- So you are saying that as Christians we should study our past, our history?
- Yes. Most of the people would find our lord Jesus Christ here.
- Many times I feel depressed that we do know Christ just by historical records.
- That is one lever of knowing Christ.
- What do you mean?
- There were saints who came to know Lord Jesus Christ by prayer.
- That too but that is not quite true.
- Jesus Christ was the son of God; He can come to us without us knowing it.
- I know that are many stories in the lives of the saints of this kind of nature.
- Yes. There are. We can be one of those stories.
- You know something more?
- I heard that in some orthodox country He was seen by some orphan.
- It is a paradox that Christ many times comes in ways that we do not know or unknown.
- I think that this related to the fact of discretion.
- How do you see the fact that many times Christianity thinks that the world is created out of nothing, ex nihilo?
- It is very sure that there was nothing before this world was created; I mean some kind of matter.
- So is like a painter who makes a painting.
- To a certain level.
- But this world is not eternal.
- No. the Bible says it will come an end of the world.
- What then?
- Have you heard of the term ontology?
- Yes. Is related to being.
- Correct. The world does not have an ontological source in itself.
- Its source is God.

- That is correct. So you, see, the end of the world can be thought in terms of return of the ontological aspects of the world to God.
- I am not quite sure I can follow you.
- We need to stay for a while on this topic.
- I quite ask you.
- You see, Bible says that in the beginning there was nothing. God started to create. He produces so to say matter. Then this matter was very much separated into the forms we know today: earth, water air.
- So this matter is going to exist as long as God allows it?
- Yes. There is no matter outside God, but God is not the same or one with the matter.
- So you say that this is the ontological distinction between matter and God?
- Yes. But there is one more thing.
- Yes. Evil does not have ontology in itself.
- It has the ontology of good.
- Yes. Here comes our problem: if there is a turning of existence towards the nothing from which everything was created or there is a turning towards evil?
- I do not know that.
- I was thinking I should write a book on this topic.
- You book should come into being.
- The main problem is that there is no being or so to say ontological being in evil. Evil uses the being of the good.
- And what is the problem?
- Well in that instance we can conclude that pure evil is very much the impossibility of get out of being.
- Radu this is very hard to understand.
- Yes it is but is not impossible. Evil is so to say a lower state of being, a parasite being. You will see that in many writing the abode of evil is called the underworld.
- Well yes. Evil is chaos, anarchy and final destruction.
- Pure evil is in the last instance self destruction.
- You are saying that in last instance evil is self destruction.
- Yes. There were many cases when this was shown.
- Can you be a bit more specific?
- I know a story that may illustrate this.
- Let's hear it.
- It is said that there were 3 thieves. They walked in the wilderness to hide. Here they found a treasure full with diamonds. They estimated that this may cost 30 million dollars. So one of them said:
- We need to make a plan.
- That is true, said the other.
- Here is what we will do: you will go to bring a car and some food to eat. We will put the treasure in the car and then we will share it. Is 10 million dollars for each one of us.

The first thief went to bring a car to take the treasure but he was thinking in himself: if I kill the other two the whole treasure is going to be mine. I know what I will do: I will poison the food and the treasure is going to be mine. The other two thieves were thinking.

- If we kill him we will share the treasure in two, each one of us is going to have 15 million dollars.

The thief with the food came; the other to thieves came and with a blow they killed him.

- We have now 15 million dollars each. Let us eat now.

They started to eat the poisoned food. Soon they both died.

So as I said the moral of the story is that evil is self destructive.

- Radu you are saying that there is no being in evil?
- No. Evil is a parasite, it uses the others.
- I think that we were getting a bit away from the topic of orient and occident.
- Yes. We should come to what we stated.
- As I said in the beginning it was orient. Actually orient comes from the word origin which means something original. From orient came the occident, which was so to say a need for perfection of what was oriental.
- Can you name few things that define or so to say a proper to orient and occident?
- I think that you can see what orient is and what is occident in music.
- Yes. It is for certain that there is an oriental and an occidental music.
- That is very true. Oriental music is very much simple does not have much harmony. Occidental music is very much dry and with lots of harmony. This is a basic distinction of course.
- But finally what kinds of music do you like the most Radu?
- I like many types of music. You are familiar with the Corsican music.
- Well they have a very interesting music in the island or Corsica.
- You think that music can express the ethos of a space or country?
- Yes. Arabic music is very different from French music.
- Do you like French music?
- To a certain extent. I do not think I am a musician.
- Neither do I.
- The truth is that whether is oriental or occidental music plays an important role in our lives.
- Yes. Music can influence people and their way of acting. If you are listening to a calm song you are becoming so to say calm and if you are listening to a vengeful song you are becoming anxious.
- The best part is that we can choose our own music.
- That is right. Music varies from time to time and from epoch to epoch.
- What do you thing of medieval music?
- There were some good parts. There was not actually rock music in middle ages.
- I head some bad things on rock music.
- I think you heard it well. The orthodox contemporary spiritual fathers say that rock music is very much satanic or so to say demonic music.
- That is so very true.
- You see in last instance you must know that rock music is not original from the orient, the first rock bands came from occident.
- The occident gave to us many bad things.
- One other thing that comes very often in occident is to create all kinds of surrogate spirituality that eventually may replace traditional orthodoxy.
- You are referring to new age and that crap?

- Yes. There are many new age movements in the occident today and we shall be concerned with that.
- Occident hopes to exist without what comes from orient. It wants to have its own independent way.
- I do not think that orient wants to dominate occident.
- But in occident there is a “fear” of not being like in the orient.
- That is nonsense. As we have established orient and occident can complement each other.
- There are very few who think this way.
- Times are to work for a common agenda of what we know as orient and occident.
- You think we can do that?
- Why not?
- Why hate each other for centuries while we can love each other?
- But pride is in game as well.
- Pride, yes. There is lots of pride in occident. We are the best; there is no one else like us.
- What you think we can do about it?
- We have to create programs that can make a better world no matter if is orient or occident. We are all humans and we are all persons.
- Who do you think we can instill feelings of love between orient and occident?
- Is hard to instill love but is very easy to instill hate.
- Hate is not good. How can we fight with it?
- It is mainly a matter of education. People are ignorant in our days; they like to live in their small lives without being interested in what others do. Some think that orient and occident is like for ever.
- I do think that the separation between orient and occident should exist, but we have to prevent people from hating each other.
- I think that there is a lot to work.
- We have all the time in the world.
- Yes. Love comes form God, and hate from the evil one.
- You went right to the essence.
- I do not think you know about a saint of the Orthodox Church: Saint Isaac the Syrian.
- I know on him.
- He said one time something very useful. He said that hell is not founded on God’s hate but on God’s love.
- I do not think I agree with that.
- You see God does not hate the evil one. On the contrary, He loves Him. This love of God is actually the main problem?
- Why?
- The evil one cannot answer back to greatness of God’s love. In this way God’s love becomes the very fire of hell.
- This is quite new to me.
- It is not new at all; saint Isaac the Syrian lived in the 4th century.
- So you are saying that the evil one or the devil cannot answer back to God’s love?
- Yes. If he would have answered he would no longer be evil.
- This is interesting to know. Loves conquers all in last instance.

- Yes. That is right.
- Radu you think then that God loves us?
- He has infinite love for us; we are His creations.
- Then why you think that there is suffering in this world?
- There is suffering because we have created it.
- There are evil men in this world.
- Yes. There are men who do not like the good. They are very much turned towards what is evil and what is not right.
- What can we do about it?
- Pray for these people. This is the technique: we do not have to hate the evil, we have to love this. In this way we defeat them.
- Why?
- Evil people cannot love, they cannot respond to love.
- So you think that if you can love an evil man you have defeated him.
- This is what God has done with the evil one. He wanted evil to God, God answered with love. In this way his fall is eternal. If you cannot make and answer to good you are lost for eternity.
- Radu I have approached with you many topics. Who has taught you so well?
- There were few professors in my past that taught me well.
- Can you name me one of them?
- Yes. There was an ethics professor that had a major role in my life.
- Who was he?
- His name is Moldovan and he is dead.
- May God rest his soul.
- Yes indeed.
- What else can you tell me about him?
- This professor of Christian ethics was very tough.
- You mean he gave small grades?
- Yes. I remember that he had his own technique of grading. All the bad grades papers that he had he would say that they were remarkable and outstanding papers but he cannot give them a good grade.
- That is funny. We have some good professors here at Holy Cross.
- Yes. I heard.
- Do you know father Eugene Pentiuc?
- I heard of him.
- He is one of my professors.
- Yes. I took Old Testament classes with him.
- Professors play an important role while we are learning.
- That is so true.
- Well you see not all professors are the same.
- I know that from Tennessee.
- There are professors who love teaching and those are the true professors. As well there are professors who teach just for money, they do not teach us well.
- Holy Cross was a new experience for me.
- It is a highly academic school.
- Yes.

- Have you been in Harvard? Is not far from you.
- I have been few times there.
- You don't like Harvard?
- It is not so much on my options.
- Harvard is a highly academic school but they are not so much concerned with religion and faith.
- That may be true. This is my final year in Holy Cross.
- What can I say it is good to use it as much as you can.
- You went to Saint Tikhon's no?
- Yes.
- You don't talk much on that.
- I graduated saint Tikhon's in 2002.
- It is not quite long ago.
- Well I came to know very well the Russians in America.
- They came very much here in America now that Soviet Union does no longer exist.
- That can be the case.
- So you lived with Russians.
- Not quite the best experience.
- Why?
- They are suspicious.
- I do not know many Russians.
- It may be possible that you don't miss much I guess.
- Russians have saints; they have saint Seraphim of Sarov.
- You are thinking to go in Russia?
- No, not at all.
- You went in Tanzania.
- I did. And this year in am going to Kenya.
- Are you sure about that?
- Very sure.
- What can I say it is your life.
- Radu you don't seem to like much your encounters with Russians.
- Is something I do not what to talk about.
- Ok. So how was your graduation?
- It was a very busy day.
- I am graduating this summer. There are many things to be done.
- You are stressed out?
- Not at all. I am happy my time here in Holy Cross is over.
- Well let's hope it is so.
- I am much concerned what I am going to do after that.
- You have options.
- What you think I should do after my graduation?
- Well, you know what they say that many think that once they graduates they ended up so to say with books.
- And you don't think so.
- I like to think in theological schools that they are so to say an initiation into study.
- You are saying that you don't end up with books once you graduate?

- No. Graduation is just the end of your initiation.
- I feel an attraction for Africa.
- I don't have much to say on that.
- Why?
- I do not feel this way.
- There is going to be a festive class at my graduation.
- Try to do your best.
- Do you think I am going to make it?
- Sure you will.
- Thank you very much for your understanding and your support.
- You are welcomed. You avoided talking to me on your thesis.
- It is too much to talk. What I need right now is something to understand me.
- You think that you are not understood.
- There is lots of pressure.
- I think is just an illusion.
- You think so?
- Yes. I do. Most people are so to say concerned with what they are going to do after the graduate.
- And what I should do?
- Serve the church, serve God.
- It is very easy to say but right know I cannot think clear.
- You will going to enter into a new period of time in your life.
- I hope is going to be better.
- We all hope.
- I had enough of dormitory and all those long classes.
- There is a price in everything you want to invest.
- Radu, I just want to thank you very much.
- For what?
- For being next to me.
- I have been some 10 years ago in your position. I know what it means.
- Again I thank you for being with me and understanding me.
- No problem Jordan.

CONCLUSIONS

Meanwhile Jordan graduated from Holy Cross in Massachusetts.

- Radu this is one of my best days ever.
- You mean you graduated?
- Yes. I am full of joy.
- Good for you.
- I am still thinking to go this summer to Africa.
- You think this is the best place to go?
- Yes. I feel the need to escape to run away.
- And Africa is what you feel is the place?
- Yes.
- Well then I have nothing to say.

- There is so much to say.
- Well you wanted your degree so now you've got it.
- Yes. I wanted this very much.
- You think so?
- Very much. This degree opens to me new paths or so to say new ways.
- You are thinking leaving Massachusetts?
- Yes. I am thinking in moving in Pennsylvania.
- I lived in Pennsylvania.
- I will go there and then I will see.
- What can I say?
- You were with me this period of time.
- I tried to do my best. You actually did.
- That is good to know.
- I am thinking to visit Kenya.
- So Kenya is not one with Tanzania?
- No. They are different countries.
- Oh. I see. I did not know that.
- I am planning to take it easy this summer.
- Well, you have been in school for quite a while at this point no?
- Yes. I did. Now I feel I need to stop.
- Very good. It seems natural to me.
- I want to forget about all for a while.
- Yes. Maybe you made too much effort.
- Holy Cross was not easy for me.
- It is an academic school.
- I found the field work program very difficult.
- You visited the prison, the inmates?
- Yes and it was difficult for me.
- It is for everybody.
- I feel I made no progress with the inmates in the field work program.
- You confronted the evil in a way.
- You think so?
- Yes I do. There are evil men in our world.
- Working with inmates is not very pleasant.
- Who said it is?
- No one.
- You see. You did what the school has asked you to do.
- Yes I did.
- Very good.

Meanwhile Jordan left for Africa.

- So how is it Jordan?
- 24 hours of travel, three lay-overs, multiple ID checks, bag checks, and coffees later I am home in the United States of America. It was a great honor to teach and thrive alongside my

American compatriots, Lexy Stang of Pittsburgh PA, Spyridoula and Vasiliki Fotinis of New Jersey, and Tim Klund of North Carolina for the two-week mission team.

- So you were not just alone?
- No.
- And you have been there for 2 weeks?
- Yes.
- Not quite so long.

The awe-inspiring experience in Kenya remains vividly in my mind. The journey into Western Tanzania with Archbishop Makarios to witness part of the ministry there was a fascinating experience. I was intrigued to witness the Kenyan funeral where so many people gathered for three days to commemorate the life of the deceased and commit his body to the tomb while dancing and singing tributes of life and praying with fervor for the soul of the departed.

- It is like a local ritual no?
- Yes.
- The children at the St. Clement school brought a great joy to our team's experience. We had many opportunities to be with the children to speak of faith, iconography, the Jesus prayer, parables, lives of Saints and to play soccer and make devotional crafts that the students cherished and enjoyed constructing.
- So you are saying you had meetings with children?
- I did. I wanted to show a open side of Christ towards the kids.
- Very good.
- The Makarios III seminary was a wonderful glimpse inside the academic and Chapel life of the students there. I enjoyed hearing the daily cycle of services in Kiswahili, Greek, and English.
- They were serving in 3 languages there?
- Yes.
- Speaking in a few of the classes was a rare blessing. I was excited to speak several times on the Ecumenical Councils, ecumenism, and Byzantine chant. The questions asked by the students made me realize how American and Kenyan viewpoints differ and gave me a better understanding into the history of African Orthodoxy.
- Good. You sent to want to connect America with Africa.
- I am just looking for salvation.
- There are many ways to salvation.
- I know that. What I know is that salvation is not easy.
- The brief two weeks in Kenya was a wonderful safari of Kenyan culture and faith. It was amazing to witness the Archdiocese's ministry and outreach to the clergy, students, children, and people near and far. It is also clear that the Kenyan Church faces real struggles and challenges yet perseveres by the grace of God. I returned home to the United States with a great sense of thanksgiving for the opportunity to serve the Lord for a time in the Kenyan Orthodox Church and to learn from their own stories and examples. I am thankful for all those who prayed for our team's success and contributed financially to make it possible.
- You are aware that there are some other orthodox churches?
- Yes. I have visited the Greek Orthodox Church.
- And now you feel like visiting the Kenyan Orthodox Church?

- Yes.
- You were thinking why?
- No. I just feel it this way.
- Well you are honest at least.
- This weekend I was able to go with several of the Seminarians and Assistants to Archbishop Makarios of Kenya to visit many places in Western Kenya. We were able to attend meetings at two schools where they are preparing for their standardized tests. We also attended an ordination and a Kenyan funeral which was very different from American funerals. There was lots of singing and dancing that I was able to record. The vehicle we were traveling in was stuck in the mud once and also had a malfunctioning fuel pump. Thank God, we were able to get home safely.
- You are saying is a different world there?
- Yes. We can say that
- Today I was able to guest lecture at the Makarios III Seminary on hospital chaplaincy, addictions, church history, and the 5th and 6th ecumenical councils. I was also able to sit in on two lectures given by Fr. Evangelos Thiani who graduated from the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology and is now teaching here. It was a great blessing to see him in action.
- So you have met with some others there?
- Yes. I did feel very good.
- You were there just two weeks?
- Yes. Why do you ask?
- Well it does not seem that the African way of life fits you.
- After two days of Orientation at the OCMC Mission Center in St. Augustine Florida and nearly a day of flying I am now with the team in Nairobi at the Makarios III Seminary and their associated schools.
- Go on I am hearing what you are saying.
- We have spent time discussing our lesson plans and meeting the excellent faculty and staff here. We were also able to have a couple meals with His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios and discuss their operations here. I will be spending the weekend with him exploring some of the area around Nairobi and visiting some of the slums. At this point I have not been able to upload any of my photos but they will be up soon.
- Then you are saying you have been to Nairobi?
- Yes. It is an interesting city.
- If you say so. I have never been there.
- I cannot comment much on that.
- You look excited.
- I told you the context of my departure.
- You are a grown up. I cannot dictate you what to do.
- You did not like me going to Africa.
- No. You could have gone to Australia if you really wanted to travel.
- Australia is far away from America.
- You wanted my opinion, I gave it to you.
- I made a 10,000 mile journey to Nairobi Kenya for a 2 week long mission trip with the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC). Tomorrow I will fly into Jacksonville,

Florida at 3 PM and will spend approximately 1.5 days in orientation at the OCMC Mission Center.

- It looks like a lot of things do to.
- Yes it does.
- The past few months I have been raising monetary support and asking people to pray for the well being of myself and the other missionaries on the trip. The past few days I have been gathering supplies and packing my gear. Some of the supplies are my own clothes and supplies I will need and some are donations to give the Kenyans, particularly for the people at the Sts. Constantine and Helen Orthodox Church in Loitokitok Kenya near Mt. Kilimanjaro where I will be going for one to two days to visit. Yesterday while organizing in preparation for the trip I found a small laptop computer that I thought I lost after I graduated from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary nearly a year and a half ago.
- So you found your computer.
- Yes I did. Several people have been asking me if I am concerned about the Ebola outbreak in Western Africa. Thankfully, Kenya is 3,000 miles from Western Africa. I feel very secure. The CDC or Kenyan agencies for disease have not issued any traveler alerts and they are cracking down on incoming flights from Western Africa at the Nairobi airport. I have had my shots for Malaria, Typhoid fever, Cholera, Hepatitis, the flu shot, and everything else.
- Good, so you made it.
- Yes I did.
- Great. There is room for better.
- I feel very good now that I am in America.
- I think you do and is natural is the country you were born.
- You did not like my trip.
- It is not of importance what I liked; it is of importance what you liked.
- I felt the need to exchange the surroundings.
- If is funny that you found Africa a land of interest.
- I did it for the church for my orthodox church.
- OK let's drop it.
- What have you been doing lately?
- I was doing some readings.
- That reminds me that I have to start reading the holy fathers again.
- Do you have a favorite holy father?
- I find Saint Maximos the Confessor very deep.
- He is actually deep.
- What do you think of saint Maximos the Confessor?
- I like him; I mean he suffered for his faith.
- Yes. There were other times in those days.
- Radu I feel lots of comfort reading saint Maximos.
- The saints were so to say inspired by God to convey to us his word.
- I had some doubts about that but not I am certain.
- I am glad do hear that.
- Have you read all the books of saint Maximos?
- He wrote quite a bit.

- Yes. His Ambigua is a very interesting writing.
- Well is very much a commentary to some difficult passages of the Scripture and some other Holy Fathers.
- What I think that I should talk with you is the need to make a difference between intellectual reading and spiritual reading.
- You are saying they are not the same?
- No. If you read books of applied mathematics you can say that that is intellectual reading.
- But that reading is good as well?
- It is good, but is not on the same scale or on the same plane with readings from the holy fathers.
- This is what you call a spiritual reading.
- Yes. Spiritual reading is a reading that we do to feed our souls.
- And you say that only the saints can do this kind of books?
- There are many who write books, but is very difficult to write spiritual books.
- You think that the books of Saint Maximus are spiritual?
- Yes. It is not like reading a novel when you read saint Maximus or other holy fathers.
- Radu, what Holy Father do you like the most?
- I like very much saint Symeon the New Theologian.
- I still have to find time to read all his books.
- Yes. We are fortunate to have his books.
- And you were saying that reading the holy fathers is like a food for our souls?
- Yes. The holy fathers do not want us to impress us with their knowledge or with their writing skills although many had these skills. The holy fathers want us to convey the word of God.
- And you are saying this is not like an intellectual thing?
- If you read a book of Immanuel Kant you can say that all he wants is to take you to the intellectual life.
- So there is a spirit difference between the books of Kant and the Holy Fathers.
- Yes. Very much. The holy fathers convey to us the words of God and what they gave experiences in relation with God.
- But God is not against intellect?
- No He is not, but we cannot reduce God just to intellect.
- You are saying that there are people who think this way?
- Yes. Many have tried to do this mostly in Middle Ages.
- And what book do you think is representative for Saint Symeon the New Theologian.
- Well he wrote Hymns of divine love.
- I heard of that book but did not read it all.
- Well you will see there what kind of level of experience has reached Saint Symeon the New Theologian.
- You think that you can relate Saint Symeon the New Theologian with Saint John the Theologian.
- Yes. They were both theologians.
- What has attracted you to saint Symeon the New Theologian?
- His love and zeal for God.
- It is hard for me to think how can someone does not love God?

- There are many of this type.
- Yes. History has proves, but still.
- Many people say that they love God but this becomes inconvenient what you reach to totally love God.
- You are saying that many abandon on the way?
- Yes. Many times people set the matter [money, food, luxury and the like] that is created by God above God.
- This is like a distortion of things?
- Yes. Many get angry on God in the moment God asks them to abandon themselves fully to God.
- In a word we do not belong to ourselves.
- Our person we can say is created by God. The person that we have is like the very gift God gave to us.
- This is good to know.
- I just want to say that I did not want to make these talks like a master to apprentice type talks. Sometimes I think you notice that I have corrected you.
- Not it was good for me. With your aid I graduated.
- Our talks are not from superior to inferior but from friend to friend.
- Radu it is very good to have you as my friend.
- Is good to know that.
- I am glad I came to meet with you.
- Nothing is happening in the world.
- Why?
- There is a God above who sees everything.
- Yes. We can conclude with that?
- We conclude with the need for honest dialogue in our times and days.
- This was what we were doing.
- Yes. We were trying to make some kind of example so to say.
- You think we did it?
- Time would say if we did or no.
- And you still believe that dialog is a good way to solve problems?
- No questions about it.
- This changes so to say my optics or my way of looking at things.
- Someone said once that the best professor is the professor who is willing to learn with his students and not just to learn from them.

THE END

